

A  
MARVEL  
MONTHLY

Number 13 50p

# STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND GRAPHICS

**BUCK ROGERS**  
IN THE 25th CENTURY

**THE AVENGERS**  
-TOP TV FANTASY

**THE ART OF  
SPACE 1999**  
EXCLUSIVE PORTFOLIO

**MOONRAKER**  
DOES BOND STILL LEAD  
OR MERELY FOLLOW?

**OMEGA MAN**

**PLUS  
ALIEN**



**BEHIND THE SCENES**



**Buck Rogers in the 25th Century~ see page 4**

# STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND GRAPHICS

Volume 2, Number 1

Edited and designed by Dez Skinn

Associate Editor: Alan McKenzie  
Art Editor: Stewart Orr  
Art Assistance: Chas Farnsworth  
Production: John Kelly  
Advertising: Top Team Ltd  
Mail Order: Verna Sutherland  
Distribution: Comag

Writers this issue:  
John Brown  
Tony Crowley  
Phil Edwards  
John Fleming  
Richard Holmes  
Tina Vahmami

Publisher: Stan Lee

Despite 13 being an unlucky number (which could be the reason we inevitably have 12 issues to a volume!) we've tried to make this issue as lucky as possible by filling it with more facts and features than ever before!

Our current reviews include **Moonraker**, **Buck Rogers** and **Beyond the Poisedon Adventure**. From the past of fantasy movies we cover **Omega Man** and **Invaders From Mars**. And from the future, our first look at **Alien**.

Television fantasy is covered in our long-awaited feature on **The Avengers** (with more to follow next month), and for graphics we offer an exclusive look at the **Space: 1999** work of production designer Keith Wilson.

We've had lots of enquiries for volume binders, so the wheels have been set in motion to produce such, more news to follow. Another popular question has been concerning back issues. Sad to say, our stocks are fast running out, with only issues 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 being available. Despite this, we are still offering them at cover price (50p) plus postage (10p each) in an attempt to make them available to everyone interested, rather than creating a false inflation.

**Starburst 14** (or Volume 2, Number 2) will be on sale September 20. See you then.

*Dez Skinn*  
Dez Skinn/Editor.

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Is James Bond series losing its grip? With the latest offering the producers seem to be leaping upon the bandwagon that was set rolling by the success of **Star Wars**.

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William Cameron Menzies, director/designer of the 1930s classic **Things to Come** made a science fiction film in the mid-fifties that has been almost forgotten.

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# "BUCK ROGERS"

IN THE 25th CENTURY





In the 1930s Buck Rogers reached the screen after the success of his more-famous imitator, Flash Gordon. Now, forty years on, history is reversed as Glen Larson's *Buck Rogers* appears in our cinemas long before the Dino de Laurentiis version of *Flash Gordon*.



Opposite top left: *Buck Rogers* (Gil Gerard) and his ever-faithful companion Twiki (Felix Silla), a 3ft 10in robot. Twiki's voice is supplied by Bugs Bunny himself. Mel Blanc. Opposite top right: Princess Ardala's bodyguard, *The Tigerman*, played by Duke Butler. Opposite below left: The villains of the story, the marauding draconians rush to prevent Buck Rogers sabotaging their mothership on its way to invade Earth. Opposite below right: Joseph Wiseman, who appeared in the title role of the first Bond movie *Dr No*, as King Draco, ruler of the Draconians. Above Buck and Twiki pause before the Rogers family memorial.

Review by Bobby Dupea and Benny Aldrich

Ray Bradbury used to dote on *Buck Rogers*. "The most beautiful sound in my life," he wrote in his introduction for *The Collected Works of Buck Rogers* book, "was... a folded newspaper kiting through the summer air and landing on my front porch. I leapt out, eyes blazing, mouth gasping for breath, hands seizing at the paper... so the hungry soul of one of Waukegan, Illinois' finest small intellects could feed upon Buck Rogers."

Buck first arrived in 1929, four years before Flash Gordon, when planes were few and far between, and very rickety, and the very idea of rockets in space—television, even—was way out poppycock. In daily comic strip form, Buck had his adventures in 50 countries and 18 languages, a movie serial with Clarence Linden (Buster) Crabbe in 1939 and was still around as an early 1950 tv hero with Ken Dibs in 1950.

I rather doubt if Ray Bradbury would recognise old Buck today, all updated courtesy of Jean-Pierre Dorléac's futuristic attire.

Producer Glen Larson is the singer,

composer, tv producer who entered the fantasy vein with *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *Battlestar Galactica*. He initially set up *Buck Rogers* as a tv pilot for a third big series. But following the mini-triumph around Europe and elsewhere of his cinema release version of *Galactica*, he decided to let cinemas have first crack at *Buck Rogers* in the 25th Century. (He tagged the century ending on the title as many people out there apparently still don't know who Buck Rogers is!)

Larson's publicist dug up another good Bradbury quote from the Buck book, and used it to underline the endeavours of Glen and company: "Without romance," wrote Ray, "without fun, the soul of man turns over, curls up its toes, groans, withers, dies."

And, in Larson's telemovie-turned-feature film, "fun" is the key. Not that anyone familiar with the all-American, 500 year out-of-time hero would expect anything else.

*Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* is a strange combination. All the ingredients are what you'd expect—*Star Wars* style dog-fights in space (adequately done), lovable

robots (fair to middling), despicable villains (the alien race of Draconians, ready to strike at a post-holocaust crippled planet Earth) and the inevitable mutants of the radioactive wastelands.

However, Larson has elevated this above the drabness of such cash-ins as *Humanoid*, *Shape of Things to Come*, *Stella Star* and his own *Galactica* by also injecting a strong element of 007 into the whole thing. To such an extent that the movie could almost be retitled *James Bond in the 25th Century*.

The title sequence is pure Bond as is the dry wit of our dashing hero. There's even an invincible "Jaws" type seven foot adversary—plus luscious ladies and big-scale dynamic finale as the hero invades the enemy base. And as if the Bond similarities were deliberate—the little-seen head villain, Draco, is played by a heavily-disguised Joseph Wiseman—Doctor No himself.

Glen Larson and his key-men, supervising producer Leslie Stevens (who wrote the script with Larson), and one of their two visual and effects conceptors, David M. Garber, tell us why they picked Buck (whose movie serial

had failed when following Flash Gordon in the late 1930s)...

**Larson:** Despite the phenomenal success of Buck Rogers in comic strips, novels, radio adventures and movie serials, this is the first time it's been possible to do him justice on film. A whole new arsenal of cameras, computers and visual affects were created—or re-designed—for this project. It's totally different to *Galactica*. That was an epic chase through the far reaches of the cosmos, led by an interplanetary man o' war. **Buck Rogers** is a look at our world, five centuries from now, laced with a lot of fun, mischief and colour. **Stevens:** First, we had to give Earth a "history". We decided that while Buck was whizzing out-of-control in space, a nuclear holocaust wiped out most of civilisation.

(Feel free to wince over that uninspired cliché).

**Stevens:** Now, in the 25th Century, life is concentrated in one enormous city in the American midwest. Outside the city is Anarchia, a desolate nomansland, populated by criminals and mutants, where you can still see the rubble of downtown Chicago.

**Garber:** The city of the future is a gleaming realm of glass and polished metal, where electronic gadgets do much of the work—and even make the laws. Its mood is rigidly moral and its people favour formal costumes which recall Edwardian England. It's an Oz-like city where pure science is king... The Draconian empire, on the other hand, is lusty and barbaric, filled with rich, deep-coloured fabrics and diabolically lethal devices. It looks like the work of the French painter Phillipe Druliet, a master of the bizarre, sensual images.

**Stevens:** Buck himself is a contrasting force. He's a brash, fun-loving guy who refuses to take the computerised society he finds on Earth seriously. During an elegant grand ball, for example, he teaches his friends—who are doing a stately minuet to computer-programmed music—to get down and boogie.

(Space Night Fever yet!)

**Stevens:** But he recognises the Draconians for what they are—cunning, ruthless space marauders—who must be blown out of the skies.

**Garber:** Almost every space ship was constructed twice. One version was a scale model which could be made to roll, yaw and pitch, like a real ship for the aerial dogfight scenes. The other was a full-sized mock-up, with electronic working parts, which was built at Universal Studios.

**Larson:** All the high-tech wizardry of modern movie-making...

**Garber:** "High-tech" applies to the state of the art, the development, on a daily basis, of new techniques, designs and equipment which can do things which previously seemed impossible. In terms of motion picture special



Far right top: Commander of Earth's defending forces Colonel Wilma Deering chats with the 500-year-old hero Buck Rogers (Gil Gerard). Far right centre: Buck disguised in a Draconian uniform. Far right below: The Tigerman (Duke Butler) put the squeeze on Buck. Top right: Princess Ardala (Pamela Hensley), Daughter of King Draco, and her bodyguard The Tigerman at the banquet given in honour of Earth's supposed allies, the Draconians.

Below right: Buck and Wilma stand high above a gleaming futuristic city of post-holocaust Earth.



effects, it refers to the most current successful breakthroughs.

Sounds great. But doesn't it always, when talented technicians battle the limitations of the previous year's (week's . . . day's) effects and build on them. When you're filming for tv though, your schedule is shorter. Time is money. Anyway, you can cheat more for the tube than the smallest of big screens. Corners are cut, no time for extra polish of half-achieved ideas.

This same tv goldrush infects casting, as well. "We had only one actor in mind for Buck and didn't even go through the bother of a screentest," says Larson. The chosen actor being Gil Gerard. Previously, he'd been an extra in *Love Story*, a new face in *Airport 77* and *Killing Stone*. Larson loves him, though. "He has a sly, virile sense of humour, much like Burt Reynolds. Just right for Buck." Looking at Gil, it seems more likely Larson recognised more than a touch of Lee Majors too—and was hoping for a success equal to his *Six Million Dollar Man*.

In the original form, our hero was an ex-Air Force officer sent to survey an abandoned mine-shaft outside Pittsburgh. Overcome by a noxious gas, he spent the next 500 years in a state of suspended animation. Too fanciful for today's audiences, said Larson and Stevens. Their script is "just as imaginative, maybe more so, but scientifically feasible." Buck is now a US astronaut, circa 1987, piloting NASA's final deep space probe when he sails through a shower of meteorites and is frozen solid with his life-support system, as his craft is thrown off its trajectory at incredible speed.

"According to Einstein, nothing can exceed the speed of light," says Stevens, "because at that point, matter becomes energy. But as you approach light speed, time moves faster for you than it does for your environment. That's why only a few months go by for Buck while some 500 years elapse on Earth."

"Scientists have observed the same phenomenon in the study of sub-atomic particles," Stevens add, "which move so fast that they exist in a different time frame and their mass changes. When they hit the speed of light, they explode infinitely—which is the basis for the atomic bomb."

And so our hero returns home 500 years overdue (think of the back pay!). But he finds not much of the old globe left, and what there is being governed by computers, and protected by an invisible force field—to keep out space pirates.

Promoted from Lieutenant in the old strips, Col. Wilma Deering is in charge of the earth's defences. She's played by ex-cover girl and tv commercial star, Erin Gray.

Pamela Hensley is the other lady enjoying Jean-Pierre Dorléac's outlandish costuming. She's the evil Princess Ardala, all dark-hair, smouldering eyes, sensuous lips and the sort of figure to turn androids to jelly. She started her career in *Rollerball*, plus playing the brave Indian brave in *Doc Savage* and just about surviving the *BJ* and *The Bear* tv episode about vampires.

Henry Silva is excellent as Kane—the Killer Kane of the comic strip, while Tim O'Connor is supposed to be the future's brightest brain. Poor Tim, he still looks like Elliott Carson in *Peyton Place*.

Then, but naturally, comes the robot. Inside Twiki's fibreglass suit, complete with Prince Valiant hairstyle, is 3ft 10in Felix Silla, an ex-

circus star who menaced George Segal as the mini-Hitler in *The Black Bird*. Mel Blanc, king of the cartoon voices, supplied Twiki's dialogue as an afterthought (which unfortunately doesn't work as the robot jumps between incomprehensible gargles and "witty" postscripts).

Among this drone's servile functions is serving as a portable pedestal for Theo, a pinball-machine of a computer, shaped like a giant stopwatch.

"The idea of a computer with a sympathetic personality began with the writers," comments Dave Garber. "Our job was to bring him to life. And the image of a jewelled setting, for a disembodied mind, appealed to us."

And so Theo, Twiki, along with Buck's Ranger III space-shuttle, the inevitable Draconian mothership, numerous pirate marauders and Wilma's starfighters, are all further examples of high-tech.

Doubtless the movie will disappoint serious sf buffs, but it should appeal to fun-loving audiences, though some of its gags seem rather adult for U certificate. (Twiki—"I'm freezing my ballbearings off!", Buck to Wilma Deering—"on the couch," After 500 years frozen, I've got to go easy on re-entry!")

Good fun, average to good effects, but little more.

## Buck Rogers in the 25th Century (1979)

Gil Gerard (as Buck Rogers), Pamela Hensley (Princess Ardala), Erin Gray (Wilma Deering), Henry Silva (Kane), Tim O'Connor (Dr Huer), Joseph Wiseman (Dreco), Duke Butler (Tigermant), Felix Silla (Twiki); voice by Mel Blanc, with Caroline Smith, John Dewey-Carter, Kevin Costes, David Cadiente, Gil Serna, Larry Duran, Kenny Endoso, Eric Lawrence, H. B. Haggarty, Colleen Kelly, Steve Jones, David Buchanan, Burt Marshall.

Directed by Daniel Haller. Produced by Richard Cafferly. Written by Executive Producer Glen A. Larson and Supervising Producer Leslie Stevens. Photographed by Frank Besenbacher, Art Director Paul Peters. Edited by John J. Dumes. Music by Stu Phillips. Sound by Andy Gilmore. John Carter and Clyde Borenson. Sound Effects by Peter Berkes. Make-up by John Carter, Jack Stone and Earl Dreihand. Costumes by Jean-Pierre Dorléac. Malt Artist Syd Dutton. Special Effects by Bud Ewing and Jack Feggetter. Visual Concepts and Effects by David M. Garber. Wayne Smith. Additional Visual Effects by Cable Corporation. Titles and Optical Effects by Universal Title. Title Design by Wayne Fitzgerald. Miniature and Optical Effects by Universal Miniature. Special Effects Photography by Peter Gilborne-Fly. Alex Funke and Keith White. Chief Model Maker Bryson Peter Gerard. Effects Illustration and Design by David Jones (supervisor), Fred Hope, Dan Goosee, Richard Lasley, Jeane Holman, Wendy Veangard. Special Camera Equipment Richard Barnett. Special Electronics by Ray Morgan Egan and George Brennan. Computer Graphics by Colin Cantwell. Animator and Rotoscope Design by Harry Moreau. Animators Angela Dames, Sherry Epperson and Maxwell Morgan. Opticist by Robert Hall (supervisor), Paul Bolger, Phillip Billa, William Brier, James Burton, Jim Castanle, Charles Cowles, Frederick Lagenbach, Ronald Longe, Massimo Northing, Richard Rippe, William O'Sullivan and Robert Wilson. Choreography by Martin Nelson. Stunt Coordinators Tony Brubaker, Brad Wough. Colour by Technicolor. A Universal production for C.I.C. release.

Time: 98 mins

Cert: U

# • MOONRAKER •

Last month *Starburst* talked to Derek Meddings, special effects wizard behind *Moonraker*. Since that interview took place, *Starburst* regular John Brosnan (author of *James Bond in the Cinema*) saw the finished film and asks—was it really worth it?



The first few minutes of *Moonraker* sets the tone for the rest of the movie—a stunt sequence of literally breath-taking brilliance involving Bond being thrown out of a plane without a parachute instead when it degenerates into pure absurdity. The pursuing villain, Richard Kiel, fails to open his parachute in time and plunges through the top of a circus tent, causing it to slowly collapse. Humour has always played an important part in the Bond films but in *Moonraker* it's carried to ridiculous extremes—to the detriment of the movie as a whole.

What's worse, the humour is on a level that makes the average *Carry On* film look

positively sophisticated by comparison, and this applies to both the corny slapstick and the dialogue. Scriptwriter Christopher Wood's *double entendres* are so appallingly juvenile that even Kenneth Williams would hesitate before unleashing them upon an audience. But as Wood, under the pseudonym of Timothy Lea, was responsible for the *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* series of books and films I suppose that's to be expected. . . .

Not that Wood should bear all the blame: according to producer Cubby Broccoli the Bond scripts are written by committee. "I sit down with the writer, director and executive producer," said Broccoli, "and we decide





# • MOONRAKER •

what we want in the script. We have discussions, we have ideas. The final decision is made by me." I can imagine Broccoli and his team falling off their chairs with laughter when they came up with some of the ideas that made it into *Moonraker* and perhaps at the time they seemed good: "Hey, what if Bond's gondola is really a high-powered, armoured speed-boat with a whole mess of hidden gadgets?" "Yeah, great idea Cubby! And when he's finally cornered in a canal he presses a button and the gondola turns into a hovercraft!" "Marvellous!" "Yeah... and then the hovercraft goes up these steps leading into a square full of amazed tourists. It will be just like that scene we had in *The Spy Who Loved Me* when Bond's underwater car drives up onto the beach and surprises everyone, only it'll be a lot funnier. We can have shots of drinkers doing double-takes as Bond goes by and waiters spilling things... we can even cut to shots of a dog and a pigeon doing double-takes! Nobody's ever

done that before!" "Great, boys, just great!" says Broccoli, wiping tears of laughter from his eyes, "and then we can have one of Bond's pursuers lose his balance and fall into the canal..." Shrieks of laughter follow.

Well, believe it or not, all the above *does* appear in one of the sequences in *Moonraker* and while watching those scenes I decided that the Bond series had gone about as far down the tube it could possibly go without reaching China.

Most of the absurdities in *Moonraker* concern the "Jaws" character, played by the giant Richard Kiel, who first appeared in *The Spy Who Loved Me*. In that film his apparent invulnerability was an amusing gimmick that was handled quite well but this time, like so much else in *Moonraker*, it's carried to extremes. Apart from falling thousands of feet out of a plane he survives crashing through a building in a runaway cable car, plunging over a waterfall and falling to Earth in the wreckage of a space station. They even

provide him with a romantic interest—a pneumatic little blonde who looks as if she came off a calendar advertising farm machinery, and the mawkish scenes they have together were, no doubt, supposed to be amusingly touching but had me writhing with embarrassment. Even worse, he's turned into a sympathetic character at the end and actually helps Bond to defeat the villain.

One has long given up expecting the Bond films to have any sort of logical plot development—the story exists only as a tenuous link between the action set pieces—but in *Moonraker* the total lack of narrative progression is hard to ignore. For instance, after the sequence where Bond has gone to great and complicated lengths to escape from a squadron of the villain's armed motor boats in some remote section of the Amazon river he then simply walks into the villain's headquarters without making any attempt at concealment. Some secret agent—he might as well carry a neon sign around with him.

Far left: Roger Moore poses for a publicity photo. Left: James Bond (Roger Moore) is hurled from an airborne plane without a parachute in the opening sequence of *Moonraker*. Below: Bond and Q (Desmond Llewelyn) discuss the operation of the wrist gun.



Above: Lois Chiles plays CIA agent Holly Goodhead.

As for the plot itself, it bears little resemblance to the original, but that's understandable because Ian Fleming's novel was published back in 1955 and is a little dated now. It concerns a mysterious millionaire called Hugo Drax who is helping to finance the British space program (how times change) out of his own pocket. He has set up a base on the South coast of England where he is planning to launch his Moonraker rocket—the first step in putting a Briton on the moon. However Drax is really a Nazi agent and plans to wreak vengeance for Germany's defeat in World War 2 by having Moonraker, complete with nuclear warhead, land right in the middle of London. But of course he is thwarted by James Bond who alters the guidance mechanism in the rocket, causing it to land on top of the submarine that Drax is using for his escape (interestingly, the gimmick was used in *The Spy Who Loved Me*).

In the film version of *Moonraker* Drax has gone up in the world—he's a multi-billionaire and obviously the richest man alive—and



"Moonraker" is now the name of the space shuttle that Drax's company is manufacturing for NASA. Drax's ambitions have also increased in scale along with his fortune—he intends to wipe out all human life on Earth and replace it with a specially bred race of perfect people who will obey his every command while he orbits above them in his space station like a god. Naturally Bond, with a little help from a squad of laser-firing American astronauts, brings Drax and his Olympian dream back down to Earth with a spectacular bump...

The outer space sequences provide the best moments in the film thanks to the special effects supervised by Derek Meddings (see the interview with him in *Starburst 11 & 12* which are simply brilliant. All the model work looks remarkably good and very convincing but the most impressive miniature is the space station based on Ken Adam's design (his interior for the space station is equally impressive). The sequence where Bond and Holly first glimpse it as they approach in their space shuttle is the most memorable in the film—it appears as a row of jewelled lights in the darkness of space then gradually comes into full view as it moves out of the Earth's shadow—though I do realize it owes a lot to the similar scene in *Star Wars*.

The battle in space between the Americans and Drax's men is also impressive, particularly when you consider how difficult it must have been to stage (shots of live actors were intercut with long shots of puppets on

wires). Unlike the similar battle in *Thunderball* (similar because it took place underwater and therefore movements were slowed down) this one moves at a fast pace and is visually exciting.

As for the cast, the plastic Roger Moore is back as James Bond and either he's getting better or I'm getting more tolerant in my old age. I didn't find him as objectionable as usual though I still maintain he is miscast in the role—more James Bond than James Bond. Michael Lonsdale, however, is excellent as Drax. Though nothing like the bizarre figure in the original novel (a plastic surgeon had made a mess of his face) Lonsdale succeeds in endowing the character with a genuine air of menace, something that has been missing from the chief Bond villains for some time. Lois Chiles as Holly Goodhead is also one of the best Bond women in a long time, though the script could have provided her with some better lines (it could have provided *everyone* with some better lines). And at the risk of sounding sexist I was very disappointed that she didn't appear *once* in the costume she's barely wearing on all the posters advertising the movie. That's what I call a serious violation of the Trades Description Act.

For all my quibbles (some of which are large ones, as Mr Wood would say) *Moonraker* is still basically good fun and I suppose that's all it's supposed to be, but I can't help wishing that the script at least measured up to all the technical expertise

that went into the making of the film.

And to end on an even sorer note—after the stunning impact of the pre-credits sequence John Barry's theme song for *Moonraker* came as an even greater anticlimax and must rank as the most forgettable of all the Bond themes. It's hard to believe that it came from the same composer responsible for *Goldfinger* or *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. I even preferred Marvin Hamlisch's "Nobody Does It Better" theme in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, which is a sad thing for a John Barry fan to have to admit.

#### **Moonraker (1979)**

Roger Moore (as James Bond), Lois Chiles (Holly Goodhead), Michael Lonsdale (Hugo Drax), Richard Kiel (Jaws), Corinne Clery (Corinne Dufour), Bernard Lee (M), Geoffrey Keen (Friedrick Grey), Desmond Llewellyn (Q), Tola Maxwell (Miss Moneybags), Toshire Suga (Chang), Blanche Ravalec (Dolly), Emily Bolton (Manuela)

Directed by Lewis Gilbert. Screenplay by Christopher Wood. Music by John Barry. Production design by Ken Barry. Director of photography Jean YVES ESCOFFIER. Film editor John Glen. Visual effects supervised by Derek Meddings. Stunts arranged by Bob Simmons. Space consultant Eric Burgess. Associate producer William P. Cartledge. Executive producer Michael G. Wilson. Produced by Albert R. Broccoli. Released through United Artists.

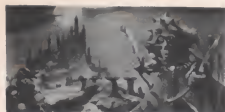
Time: 126 mins.

Cert: A



To gain access to the mountain hideout of Hugo Drax James Bond follows Irko Bochenko (above) through a concealed doorway cut in the rock. Right: A rare moment of Anglo-American cooperation between the British James Bond and the American Holly Goodhead.

# POSTERS



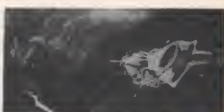
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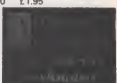
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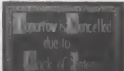
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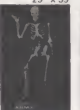
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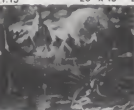
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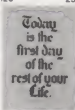
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# THE AVENGERS

Continuing *Starburst's* irregular *Telefantasy* series, Richard Holliss looks back at a British tv show that, though not strictly science fiction, contained more than its share of sf elements.

The problem with most tv programmes relating to science fiction is that they date very quickly. This can also be true of most sf films, due possibly to the style in which the film was made, the acting, or the usual restricted budget. Of course an extensive budget enables most sf movies to stand the test of time, by supplementing good special effects work (*War of the Worlds*, *Forbidden Planet*, etc) with equally superior photography (*The Time Machine*, *2001 A Space Odyssey*), although the human drama is usually laughed off the screen by today's more cynical audiences brought up on such sf fare as *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters* and the forthcoming *Alien*.

When viewed today, excerpts from early sixties *Dr. Who* episodes don't somehow, appear to be as outstanding as we remember them. Therefore it's rewarding when television occasionally produces the odd series that uses sf more casually not stilted episodes with outdated special effects and limited budgets and presents a programme as unique today as when it was first screened. Certainly Patrick McGoochan's *The Prisoner* falls into this category as does ABC tv's *The Avengers*, a good example of scripts still emerging as witty and intelligent, the stories complex and the surrealistic visual content intact.

*The Avengers* bordered on sf concepts more successfully than any other show of its type. Its producer at the show's initial appearance described it as "tongue in cheek crime-fiction for people who think!" *The Avengers* started under another title *Police Surgeon*, when we were first introduced to Ian Hendry and his partner Patrick MacNee as undercover agent John Steed. Steed, according to the producers, was an employee of M15½. The year was 1961, but by the beginning of 1962, the show had been brought to an abrupt end by an Equity dispute. After a pilot written by Brian Clemens, the programme re-emerged in May 1962 as *The Avengers*, and although it still starred Patrick MacNee as John Steed, Ian Hendry had vanished and in his place appeared Honor Blackman as Cathy Gale, a partner with a difference. She had a tougher



image that most other female characters on tv, she wore black leather suits, revolutionising women's fashions, and was more than capable of looking after herself. Patrick MacNee on the other hand was asked to play his part in a more light-hearted way, so he bought himself a bowler hat, brolly and a saucy Saville Row suit and *The Avengers* cult was born.

Brian Clemens, writer and winner of the 1963 Edgar Allen Poe Award for telethriller writing in the USA, moved into the role of associate producer and script editor. Albert Fennell who had been associate producer on the ghost film *The Innocents* became his partner. Together they took *The Avengers* to new heights in tv fantasy. Brian Clemens had full creative control over the series at this point and described the programme as "a totally unreal world populated by larger-than-life heroes and villains". It ran through two series of 26 episodes establishing *The Avengers* as the

most fashionable and talked-about thriller series in UK television.

Then in 1964 Honor Blackman left to star as Pussy Galore in the James Bond movie *Goldfinger*, a role which still retained much of Cathy Gale's tough, leather-clad image. Audiences had to wait until September 1965 before they saw John Steed's new partner, the wealthy widow of a test pilot—Mrs Emma Peel (*Diana Rigg*).

However Diana Rigg was, in fact, only the second choice of producers Clemens and Fennell. They tested quite a number of actresses before deciding, initially, on Elizabeth Shepherd (recently seen in *Omen 2*). Two episodes were even filmed with her as Emma Peel. Later both episodes were re-shot with Diana Rigg. Producer Julian Wintle described Diana Rigg as possessing an animal-like quality and co-star Patrick MacNee was reported to have said "I'm glad she's on my side!"

Diana Rigg spent her childhood in India, although on coming to Britain, she studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and toured with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Her popularity in *The Avengers* even prompted discussion on a possible feature film, but it unfortunately never appeared. The style of acting in *The Avengers* was completely different to that which Diana Rigg had been used to, in that it required her to master 60 pages of dialogue in one week, working 14 hours a day learning lines and practising judo.

In the early days of the series, her part was far removed from the one portrayed by Honor Blackman. Instead of the tough image, she played a slightly scatter-brained school-girl type. One story revealed how she kept locking herself out of her flat and had to throw milk bottles through the windows to get in. She soon however adopted her own style—more feminine, but not to be under-estimated. Her defence against the villains incorporated judo and karate and her style of dress also created a precedent in women's fashions.

The series, made for the first time on film rather than videotape, was shot at the EMI film studios, Elstree, which at the time were called the Associated British Studios. Each





Above: in the episode *The Gravediggers* Emma Peel is tied down on a miniature railway track. Here photographers snap publicity pictures on the set. Below: The See-Through Man was a scientist who attempted to master invisibility.







Opposite: Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) in one of the crazy corridors of *The House that Jack Built*. Inset top left: In *The Silent Dust* a madman threatened to destroy all plant life in Hertfordshire. Inset to right: Patrick Macnee poses on the set of *The Living Dead*. Inset below: Emma Peel's style of dress revolutionised women's fashions. Above: Stunt director Ray Austin (left) and an unknown stuntman take a tumble at the hands of Diana Rigg.

episode cost £30,000 to produce and spanned a period of 10 days' shooting. Ray Austin devised the stunts. Austin also scripted *Department S* and among his directorial credits are programmes like *Journey into the Unknown*, *The Champions*, *Black Beauty* and *Space 1999*. Harry Pottle was art director, and telefilm expert Roy Ward Baker, director of Hammer's film version of *Quatermass and the Pit*, headed the team of directors. The first series was filmed in black and white and consisted of 26 episodes. The title music was revamped under the talents of Laurie Johnson, and established the theme that even today is immediately recognizable as *The Avengers*.

Diana Rigg's weekly salary was £150, although she was later to claim that she was worth at least three times that. Quite a few of the earlier stories were normal thriller adventures with tongue-in-cheek villains. The producers began to spoof other tv shows and films. In the second episode *The Gravediggers* Emma is tied to a railway line (a miniature one). As the train gets closer, Steed battles the villains in the open carriages, alighting to change the points and alter the train's direction in the nick of time. In another episode *Small Game for Big Hunters* Bill Fraser, an eccentric explorer whose gigantic greenhouse sports a fantastic

tropical jungle, remarks to our heroes, upon hearing drumbeats somewhere off in the foliage, "By George! The natives are restless tonight!"

It was during this series that the sf formula began to appear. Brian Clemens described it recently as "a wildness similar to the James Bond adventures. If you are writing stories with larger-than-life characters, the ideas have to become more and more bizarre and if that means it will lean into sf, it was not intentional".

The first sf show was episode three, *The Cybernauts* starring Michael Gough. Gough plays a scientist, Dr Clement Armstrong, angry at the authorities because they have rejected his automation techniques, a line of work in which an accident has confined him to a wheelchair. With his assistant Benson, played by Frederick Jaeger, he decides to wreak his vengeance on the other scientists, who are his rivals in the automation stakes. Using his cybernetic knowledge, he builds the Cybernauts, steel robots with superior strength capable of smashing their way through any obstacle. Armstrong then anonymously sends his enemies ordinary-looking pens as presents. But the pens contain homing devices for the robots. Gradually each one of the scientists meets a nasty end. Because of the method used by

the Cybernauts to kill their victims (a whip like blow to the neck) Emma investigates the local Karate school with little success. When she gets too close to the truth, Armstrong sends her a pen as a present. Steed meanwhile has found out the secret of the homing device and races to save Emma. Cornered in Armstrong's warehouse, Emma cringes from the advancing mechanical man. Steed calls to her to throw him the pen. She does so and he pins it onto the jacket of the second Cybernaut activated by Benson to attack him. The two Cybernauts clash, chopping each other to pieces. Armstrong tries to intervene, but dies at the hands of his creations. *The Cybernauts* was an excellent story and a very original twist on the usual robot adventure.

(Incidentally pens were the reason for death in another episode called *Dial a Deadly Number*, when a needle would spring out of them into the heart of the owner on a signal from the villain).

The next episode continued the sf theme, this time with a nuclear threat. *Death at Bargain Prices* by Brian Clemens tells of another madman, the owner of a large department store, not unlike Harrods in appearance, who plans a nasty blackmail scheme for the British Government. Agents sent to investigate mysteriously disappear.

Emma goes to work there and discovers the designs on the floor of the store are associated with nuclear physics. The whole fabric of the store is a bomb, with the detonator at the bottom of the lift shaft. If the government doesn't pay up, the lift will descend with unknowing customers, hit the plunger and bury London under a pile of radioactive rubble. Steed joins Emma to stop the scientist, and as the lift descends Steed thrusts his faithful broly into the mechanism, jamming the lift inches from oblivion. London is saved.

*Surfeit of H<sub>2</sub>O* tells of another crazy character who creates the ultimate weapon—rain to order. The opening of the episode shows a man, who threatens to expose the secret, knocked to the ground and drowned under the weight of a sudden cloudburst in the middle of a field. The madman is called Noah and is busily building an ark to escape the coming catastrophe. Steed and Emma finally overpower the villain in the most spectacular fight ever seen in torrential downpour of rain—indoors! This episode highlighted the location filming that was to become a large part of *The Avengers* plots and also contained the most convincing fights to be seen in a British tv series since Roger Moore's *The Saint*.

*Maneater of Surrey Green*, tells of a triffid-like growth cultured under tarpaulin sheeting that happily eats any stray person who wanders too near. Emma is captured and tortured in a vegetable press, but Steed finally wins through with a burst of weed killer, and the plant dies. Very atmospherically photographed and much better than the film version of *Day of the Triffids*.

*Silent Dust* directed by Roy Ward Baker is about a scientist who creates a fertilizer capable of destroying all plant life. He decides to hold the Government to ransom for a million pounds or he will destroy

Hertfordshire.

In the last really great sf episode of the first series, Emma is lured to a house where she is menaced by all kinds of weird dangers. Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Don Leaver the story was called *The House that Jack Built*. It tells how Emma, believing an invitation to a strange house is from a long lost uncle, leaves Steed behind and goes there with a special door key sent to her through the post. The key not only unlocks the door, it also unlocks the house, a fantastic scientific gadget that subjects Emma to all sorts of perils. She finds a gravestone with her name on it. When she is menaced by back-projection of a lion leaping at her, she escapes through different rooms, only to find herself back where she started. She descends down a spiral staircase and finds herself three floors up. Eventually penetrating the inner sanctum she finds her tormentor, already dead and embalmed but whose last act had been to devise a house to destroy her. She manages to foil this death legacy and escape, with a little help from Steed.

The most interesting part of the black and white series was the way in which the episodes ended. Emma and Steed would be seen departing into the sunset in all kinds of transport from bubble cars to hot air balloons. At the conclusion of the series, the show moved into its 1966 summer recess and it was at that time that Diana Rigg's attitude towards the show changed. She threatened not to renew her contract unless she received more money. Her demands were met and she returned in Autumn 1966 to the series on £450 a week. "For once I was getting more than the cameraman" she said.

The new series went into production, 24 episodes in colour with a world audience of 30 million viewers in 60 countries. The Americans were just becoming aware of this phenomenal show called *The Avengers*. It

had been premiered by ABC tv on March 28th, 1966, with a screening of the first 13 black and white episodes with Diana Rigg. (The Honor Blackman series, although shown in Canada and Australia, never appeared on American tv.) By the time the Americans had gone overboard on the series, the majority of the colour stories had already been filmed. It was too late for any American influence to sway the British producers. As Brian Clemens said at the time, "First we made the show and then we sold it."

*The Avengers* was sold to America for £350,000. In May 1967 Diana Rigg was nominated for an American *Emmy*. (It was won that year by Barbara Bain of *Mission Impossible*) and voted *Actress of the Year* by 16 European countries screening *The Avengers*.

Brian Clemens knew that they had created a cardboard never-never land in which everybody was beautiful and the dustmen had the manners of dukes. A modern fairy story, a fantasy, that had earned around 5 million pounds in 90 countries. If the American networks had had any control over creation of the series, the whole format of *The Avengers* could have been ruined. No bowler-hatted hero—the network would have insisted he was either American, or had a dog, or even a wife. *The Avengers* would never have survived that. It was unique because it was typically British and didn't pander to any American system of presentation. It was this individualism that made it such a success in the States.

Next issue: The second and concluding part of Starburst's overview of the sf segments of the *Avengers* series covers such episodes as *Return of the Cybernauts* and *From Venus with Love*.



Above: Ray Austin spars with Diana Rigg in *Death at Bargain Price*. Right: One of the deadly cybernauts that appeared in the third Diana Rigg episode.





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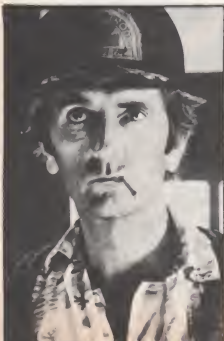
## STARBURST LOOKS AT THE

Feature by Alan Murdoch

**A**fter the phenomenal success of their sf blockbuster *Star Wars*, Twentieth Century-Fox realised that the Lucas film would be a tough act to follow. Casting around they discovered a property they had bought in February 1977, three months before the American opening of *Star Wars*. At the time the film, tentatively entitled *Alien*, was budgeted at a modest \$4.5 million, but as *Star Wars* began to break all box office records somebody at Fox realised that sf would soon be big business and the budget crept slowly towards the \$10 million mark.

As early as 1975 Dan O'Bannon, half the creative team behind the sf classic *Dark Star* (see *Starburst* 5), was toying with an idea for a science fiction film to be called *Star Beast*. The premise centred around a malevolent creature loose among humans, a plot device which has its roots planted firmly in the 1951 Howard Hawks movie *The Thing from Another World* (see *Starburst* 12). And as the final script took shape O'Bannon had already decided on the look he wanted to give to *Alien*. Despite some opposition from Fox O'Bannon brought in Swiss surrealist artist H. R. Giger to design the alien hardware and the title star itself. Such established sf artists as Chris Foss, Jean Giraud and Ron Cobb were signed to design the Earth spaceships and other hardware, and though none of Foss' designs appear in the finished film he does receive a screen credit for his contribution to the pre-production designs.

This creative team had got together when Alexander Jodorowsky, who produced such obscure movies as *El Topo* and *Holy Mountain*, contracted Dan O'Bannon to direct



# I E N

## MAKING OF A NEW SF SHOCKER



Far left: The engineering technician of the *Nostramo*, Brett, is played by Harry Dean Stanton. Above: Ship's engineer Parker (Yaphet Kotto) and navigator Lambert (Veronica Cartwright) move warily around a large piece of machinery in a darkened storage hold aboard the *Nostramo*. Right: Ian Holm is Ash, science officer of the *Nostramo*.

the special effects on his film version of Frank Herbert's *Dune*. O'Bannon, in turn, brought in Ron Cobb, who had designed the space ship for *Dark Star*. Jodorowsky himself had hired Jean (Moebius) Giraud, English sf artist Chris Foss and Giger. When the *Dune* project was cancelled, much of the design work was cannibalised for *Alien*.

After *Dark Star* was put before the public most of the credit for the film's modest success went to John Carpenter as the director. Although O'Bannon had directed the special effects, co-scripted and actually appeared in the movie, his efforts went unrecognised. After the cancellation of *Dune*, Dan O'Bannon found himself in Los Angeles, broke. He stayed with an old friend, Ron Shussett, and together they worked on O'Bannon's *Star Beast* story, ending up with the basis of the *Alien* script. But after he had sold his script to Twentieth Century-Fox, O'Bannon was hospitalised with a stomach ailment and spent most of 1977 laid up until the decision was made to transport the whole *Alien* project to Shepperton Studios, England. The move forced O'Bannon to leave his hospital bed and go to work. Amazingly he made what appeared to be a complete recovery and the doctors are still baffled.

Originally, Walter Hill, the man behind such recent hits as *The Driver* and *The Warriors*, was slated to direct but due to prior commitments he had to step down in favour of Ridley Scott, a relative newcomer with only one feature film, *The Duellists*, to his credit. However Scott's extensive experience in designing and directing over 3000 tv commercials (that's roughly equivalent to sixteen feature films!) has been a major factor in





Left: Parker (Yaphet Kotto), clutching his flame-thrower, searches the corridors of the *Nostromo* for a sign of the alien. Below: Lambert (Veronica Cartwright) and Dallas (Tom Skerritt) lower Kane (John Hurt) into a gloomy underground cavern where he finds a field of stange, egg-like growths. Right: Kane (John Hurt) stands deep in thought on the bridge of the *Nostromo*.



pulling *Alien* together. As well as directing, Scott acted as his own cameraman, created many storyboards and supervised the final editing of the film. A fine artist himself, Scott worked closely with the production designers and alone is responsible for meshing together the diverse styles of Cobb, Giger and Giraud.

Though some of the operating mechanisms were built by Carlo Rambaldi, the man responsible for Dino De Laurentiis' mechanical *King Kong* and the grinning extra-terrestrial in the finale of *Close Encounters*, the design and execution of the final form of the alien fell to H. R. Giger. The story goes that Giger had a hard time convincing the producers that he could make a good job of it. British effects man Roger Dicken, who worked on *Warlords of Atlantis*, constructed and manipulated the marionette versions of the monster.

The special effects were completed on a budget of \$3 million, supervised by the British team of Brian Johnson and Nick Alder, who had worked together on Gerry Anderson's

**Space 1999.** Johnson was labelled "Special Effects Supervisor", while Alder's screen credit read "Special Effects Director". The effects work was carried out at Bray Studios, Windsor, former home of Hammer Films.

The space scenes were shot using a rotoscoping process which sounds closer to the method used for *2001 A Space Odyssey* than to the blue screen technique utilised by John Dykstra on *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica*. The frame-by-frame hand painted action of the rotoscope method is reputed to increase the clarity and credibility of the image on the screen. In an early scene in the film, the camera zooms towards the *Nostromo*, past stars and planets, then into close-up and finally, in a *tour de force* of special effects, through a porthole and into the ship in one continuous shot!

The *Nostromo* is a space tug which tows a vast, three-sectioned, interstellar mineral refinery almost one and a half miles long. Constructed on three levels the *Nostromo* was originally envisaged as a three tier set,

but the restricted camera access rendered the concept unworkable.

The uppermost level of the ship, level "A", was built on Stage C at Shepperton Studios. The most important level in the ship (and in the film), it consists of living areas, an infirmary, a maze of corridors, and, most important of all, the spectacular, fully-operational bridge. Production designer Michael Seymour is particularly proud of the bridge set, claiming that every button, dial and switch actually does something, whether it's causing a light to flash or a door to open. The bridge also contains nearly forty tv screens ranging in size from 5ins to 22ins which convey all kinds of information to the crew, from computer-constructed navigational diagrams to views of the exterior of the ship.

The *Nostromo* is guided in space by a remarkable talking computer, called "Mother" by the crew. The computer pilots the ship while the astronauts are in hibernation and monitors their life support systems.





Level "B" is the general maintenance area and level "C" contains the huge engine rooms and the giant area which houses the Nostromo's landing gear when retracted.

The crew of the Nostromo are not the swashbuckling heroic types of *Star Wars*. Rather they are interstellar lorry drivers who happen to pilot a starship instead of an articulated truck. When they are awakened from hypersleep by an apparent distress signal they decide to investigate, not for any compassionate or altruistic reasons but because should they fail to respond their cargo of valuable minerals could be forfeit.

The captain of the Nostromo, Dallas, is played by Tom Skerrit, who recently appeared in *Ice Castles* and *The Turning Point* and who was in the movie *MASH*. Second-in-command is Sigourney Weaver as Ripley, the ship's warrant officer. She makes her film debut with *Alien* but has much experience on the stage on both sides of the Atlantic. Lambert, the navigator of the Nostromo, is portrayed by Veronica Cart-

wright, a former child star who was in Hitchcock's *The Birds* and was seen most recently as Nancy Belicec in Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Harry Dean Stanton appears as the engineering technician, Brett. His films include *Cool Hand Luke*, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* and *The Wind and the Lion*. British actor John Hurt is cast in the role of Kane. Hurt achieved fame in Britain for his appearances in such tv productions as *The Naked Civil Servant* and *I, Claudius*. The character Ash, the science officer of the Nostromo, is played by Ian Holm who has had roles in *Young Winston*, *Les Misérables* and *Holocaust*. And finally Yaphet Kotto, who plays Parker the ship's engineer, has appeared in *Live and Let Die*, *Raid on Entebbe* (as Idi Amin) and *Blue Collar*.

Twentieth Century-Fox are being very cagey about the actual story of *Alien*. It is known that the film is heavy on horror-shock tactics. The alien itself comes aboard the Nostromo in the form of a small parasite living on Kane (*John Hurt*). But the creature

undergoes a strange and terrible metamorphosis, becomes a free-living entity and preys on the remaining six crew members. H. R. Giger, creator of the creature has described it as "Elegant and deadly. It destroys to live and it lives to destroy." The claustrophobic interiors of the ship make the menace all the more horrible. After all, when you are on board a star ship in deep space there is nowhere to run to.

Twentieth Century-Fox, on perhaps an optimistic note, opened *Alien* to the American public exactly two years to the day after the US premiere of *Star Wars* on May 25th, 1979. However Fox are spending even more money on promoting *Alien* than they did on their earlier sci-fi blockbuster. The film seems to be doing a brisk trade on the other side of the Atlantic and the first reports are that the film is perhaps one of the most tense horror-thrillers of recent years. By the time this issue reaches you, *Starburst* will have seen the film and our review will follow next month.

## THE ART OF

# SPACE 1999

### Starburst talks to British production designer Keith Wilson

Interview by John Fleming

**A**rt Director Keith Wilson was the man responsible for the over-all look of Gerry Anderson's *Space 1999*, one of the most visually stunning television series of recent years. But his working relationship with Anderson stretches way back.

Wilson joined the Anderson operation straight from Medway College of Art, in Rochester, where he had studied theatrical design. His move into the film industry was no surprise: "I went to the cinema as a child all the time. I used to go to the cinema from school. That was my passion, really." Also, in a way, he prefers cinema to the theatre: "I like creating something that's believable, as opposed to the theatre which isn't."

When Keith Wilson started with the company, Gerry Anderson had just finished *Supercar* and his *Fireball XL-5* project was just about to begin. Wilson started as an assistant to Art Director Bob Bell and worked on all the Anderson tv series right through to *Space 1999*, on which he was himself Art Director. He also worked as an assistant on a horror feature *The Revenge of Dr Death* (1974) and as an assistant on the



**Starburst:** Sometimes *Space 1999* was criticised because of the scripts or scientific details or acting, but never Brian Johnson's special effects or your design work.

**Keith Wilson:** Yes, there were a lot of American (newspaper) reports at the time the show first came out. Barbara and Martin Landau had all the press sent over and it always said that the sets and the special effects were the thing to watch.

*Your working relationship with Brian*

*Johnson must have been vital.*

Well, I've known Brian for a long time. He started with Gerry Anderson at the same time

**"Britain has the best technicians in the world."**

that I did. His first series was *Fireball XL-5* too: he was Derek Meddings' assistant. I've known Brian as long as I've been in the business. I knew what he could do and he

non-Anderson tv series *The Pathfinders*. But, he says, basically he was always working for Gerry—"When he stopped, I would do something else, but I would always go back to him." Between the two series of *Space 1999*, Wilson worked on the Anglo-German tv series *Star Maidens* and, when *Space 1999* finally ended, he designed the second series of *The New Avengers*.

After that, he moved into feature films with *International Velvet* (1978). He saw this as a way to avoid typecasting in the sf field and he also wanted to work with director Bryan Forbes, whose work he greatly admired. Last year, Wilson designed *A Man Called Intrepid* (to be released as a feature film in Britain and a three-part tv series in the US).

**Starburst** interviewed Keith Wilson at home in Windsor, shortly after he had finished the soccer feature *Yesterday's Hero* and while he was preparing two projects: a proposed film of *Genesis* and one on the last 24 hours of Jesus' life *The Day Christ Died*. "Now," he laughed "I'm getting a reputation as a religious designer!" We talked mainly, though, about *Space 1999*.

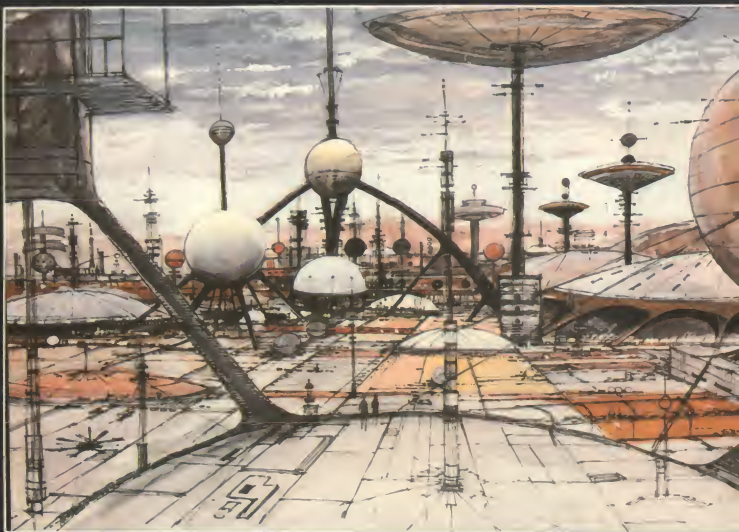
knew what I could do. We were able to work very well together. If we had a situation that needed his special talent to design it, then he would do it.

*You presumably co-operated on things like the Eagle craft.*

We'd work together on it. He'd show me the sketch of the exterior and I'd say, *Well, this doesn't really work for the interior* and we'd work together on it. When we came to do *Space City* (ie Moonbase Alpha), I said I want



Inset top: The original painting upon which the *Space 1999* character Maya was based. Above: Keith Wilson reworked the original design to make the concept more practical.

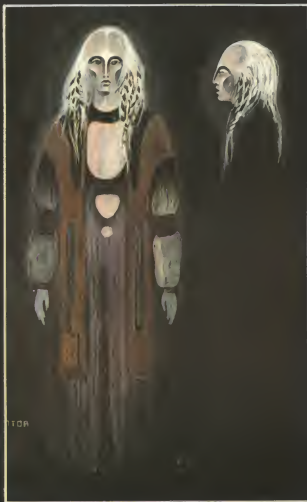


Sketch for one of the futuristic cities in the Anglo-German coproduction *Star Maidens*.

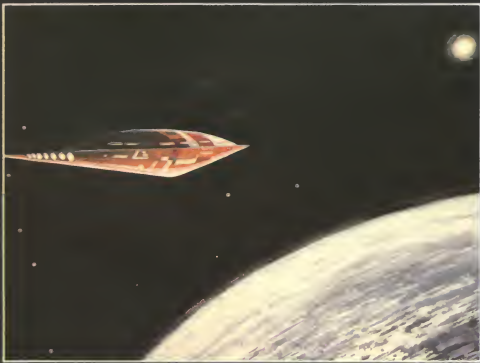


A space scene design concept created by Keith Wilson.





The concept sketch for the Christopher Lee character Zantox in the *Space 1999* episode *Earthbound*.



This space scene is an early design for the *Star Maidens* series.

to do this style of modular building which will alter the shape of your model. So, from that point of view, we worked very closely together. But he was at Bray Studios and I was at Pinewood so we saw very little of each other, in fact.

**Why did you choose a modular design for *Moonbase*?**

Well, for actually building the sets, it was absolutely essential. I wanted this clinical science-fiction look and I had to be able to re-construct sets very, very quickly. We virtually had an alien planet or an alien spaceship every two weeks, so I couldn't spend a lot of time on the *Moonbase* sets. I

**"I designed the alien costumes, alien makeup, in fact everything alien."**

designed the modular system so that, within hours, I could build another set or another room or I could just open the whole thing up and make it into a series of corridors very quickly because everything fitted together like a big jigsaw. I spent a lot of time and a lot of the money at the beginning of the series designing that system, knowing that once it was built I could virtually forget it and I could concentrate all my efforts on the alien planets. It was the only way to do it.

**Some people might think it's easy to design a room.**

It's not just a matter of designing a room where you're going to shoot scenes with certain people in. The idea is to design something which you can believe that person would live in. It doesn't matter what it is. Whether it's science fiction or it's *Genesis*. You've got to believe it and that's the whole point of my job.

**In science fiction, designing rooms that reflect their occupants' personalities can't be easy.**

Doing *Space* was a problem because I had created a clinical atmosphere, therefore expressing personality was very difficult. This room that we're sitting in has little

**"I occasionally see an old console from *Space 1999* appearing on *Doctor Who*."**

touches of me because I live here and have lived here for a while. It has accumulated its personality from my personality. But to put a group of people on the Moon in a clinical atmosphere and give that atmosphere a personality is very, very difficult.

**I believe you tried to give the uniforms more character in the second series by giving them pockets and so on.**

That's right. On the first series of *Space*, we had a "name" to design the costumes—Rudi Gernreich, "Mr Topless"—he designed the topless dress. I didn't feel it was necessary to have a name of that calibre connected with the series because the type of people who'd be watching the series couldn't care less if he's "Mr Topless" or not. We ended up with a situation of not only clinical sets but clinical clothes. All he designed, in fact, was the uniform on the first series. I designed the alien costumes, alien make-up, everything alien. On the second series, we didn't have to



This painting was the design for an unfilmed *Domed City* sequence in *Space 1999*.

stick to Mr Gernreich's design for the uniform. So I brought in a girl designer and between us we created the new uniform based on the old one, giving it personality but not changing it so much that nobody would recognise it. We were able to put on skirts and badges and bits and pieces to give it personality.

*With aliens, you must always face the danger that they just look like men dressed up in rubbersuits.*

On a series of that nature it's a problem. On something like *Star Wars*, where you've got months and months to practise and experiment, it's different. We had to come up with an alien in two weeks. Therefore, I

**"We had a new alien planet or spaceship every two weeks."**

suppose, some of our monsters *did* look like somebody in a rubber suit because we didn't have the time or the money to experiment. I mean, I think the aliens in *Star Wars* were brilliant, but they had all the time and the money in the world to make it work. We didn't.

*So one of your problems was to disguise the human figure cheaply.*

Also you had to be thinking all the time *Right, if I use that monster in this script, what can I do to it for the next one?* So you make pieces that attach to it and you design it in such a way that you know if you put another piece here it's going to look different. You had to be thinking ahead the whole time.

*There was the Grove of Psyche set you designed for The Metamorph episode.*

Yes, I think I used that set about four times without actually doing much to it structurally. We did that all the time. We had to because it saved time and money. Time was our biggest enemy.

*You only had ten days per episode on Space 1999, didn't you?*

That's right. We did things on *Space* that



Above: The original design for the Peter Cushing character Reen from the planet Zenna in the episode Missing Link.

other people would hesitate to do even in a big feature film. With the budget that we had, I think we did very well.

*You had no scientific advisers on the series. Did that help or hinder you?*

I personally don't like technical advisers. I've done quite a few films where technical advisers can be a pain because they know their job, but they don't know film-making. We know what we can get away with; they don't. Obviously, in some cases, it's good to have a technical adviser. But you've got to have artistic license—theatrical license—you've got to if you're going to make it work,

otherwise it's going to be very boring. It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter. Who's to say what's possible?

*What about your creative contribution to the scripts?*

I used to have lunch every day with the scriptwriters. Because of the nature of the series, I had to have a lot of say.

*You mean because it was such a visual series?*

Yes and Gerry obviously gave me the say because he had to. It was no good scriptwriters writing some incredible thing because I would get a copy of the scripts and I'd walk into Gerry's office and say, *This is impossible. I cannot do it. I've got ten days.*

**"I think the aliens in *Star Wars* were brilliant."**

*I'm already in the middle of a film that's very difficult and you expect me to do this. So he used to say, Well, what can you do? How can we alter it to make it work?* So I would spend a lot of time with the scriptwriters and two in particular—Chris Penfold and Johnny Byrne. We used to talk every lunchtime. So a lot of ideas for the scriptwriters, particularly with those two scriptwriters, would spring from our conversations. I was always very keen on doing monsters and that sort of thing because I felt that's what the public wanted. Whether I was right or wrong is another thing. *People watch Dr Who for the monsters.*

Exactly. That was my argument. That was always my argument. Look at how long *Dr Who*'s been running and look at what is on *Dr Who* and the reaction of the kids to it. Monsters. They love them.

*In Space 1999, are the stories true about conflicting advice—and demands—from the States? One day they would want monsters, the next day no monsters.*

I think the biggest mistake, in the second series, was concentrating everything. We'd achieved a scale on the first series that was

big. On the second series—why I don't know—they decided it was too big. Everything was concentrated and I think it was a mistake because I think it made the show "small".

*Concentrated in what sense?*

Concentrated in the scale of the sets particularly. I wasn't allowed to make the sets as big as I did on the first series. I think we lost a lot by doing that.

*I remember seeing an episode of Space 1999 in a preview theatre and, a few days later, seeing it on a television set and it didn't have the same impact on a small screen.*

They always look better on the big screen. They were made for the big screen. In fact, I think it was in Italy, when they first came out,

**"Some of our monsters did look like a man in a rubber suit."**

they put two or three together (for the cinema) and the streets of Rome were empty because everyone was going to the cinema. It seemed to do well everywhere except Britain.

I think it was a disaster the way it was handled here. Absolute disaster. It was being shown (in London) on Saturday morning at eleven o'clock. I never ever understood it. I think it was the best quality science fiction show that had been made for television. You had *Star Trek* being shown year after year and here we had a brand new show and it was being thrown away. Why I will never know.

*Maybe the ITV Controllers thought science fiction was only for kids.*

But they only had to look at the BBC to see the reaction that *Star Trek* was having and *Dr Who* was having. Peak viewing on both shows.

*The production quality of Star Trek and Dr Who was Toytown in comparison with Space 1999.*

Yes. Well, they didn't have the money we had. Presumably you could still have done with more, though?

Oh well, there's never enough on something like that. You can just go on and on because it is science fiction. You can let your

imagination go wild.

*There's the theory that you can get away without showing detail. If it's in the script, you don't have to see it.*

Well, that's true to an extent. We learnt a lot from *Star Trek* on that. At one point, we showed everything but then we noticed that he (*Gene Roddenberry*) wasn't showing everything. Mr Spock would say, "Look! There's a space-ship on my scope!" You knew there was a space-ship on his scope because he'd just said so—you didn't have to show it. So, in the second series, we did a lot more of that sort of thing.

*For budgetary reasons as well?*

(Uncertain pause) Yes. Because it did take a lot of time and it was expensive—all the monitors and that sort of thing.

*Whatever happened to all the material that was built for Space 1999?*

The majority of my best stuff is in Blackpool at the Gerry Anderson exhibition. (*The World of Gerry Anderson at The Golden Mile Centre*) It's an exhibition that we built a couple of years ago now. It consists of all Brian Johnson's models; puppets right the way back to the beginning; a lot of my designs; Brian the Brain (from the *Space 1999* episode of the same name); a lot of my monsters; everything that Gerry's done.

**"I wanted a clinical science fiction look."**

*And most of the rest of your stuff got chucked out?*

Yes. Destroyed. I occasionally see an old console appear on something like *Dr Who*. How did they get it?

When we finished, I think Effects Associates (a company based at Pinewood Studios) got stuff that was going to be burnt and that would have included some of our consoles. They hire them out to anyone who wants them. So the BBC see a console and they hire it. Probably I'm the only one who ever recognises the fact that I designed it for *Space 1999*.

*Art Directors don't get public recognition, do they? It's only stars and directors.*

Occasionally. It's getting better. If you look at someone like John Barry, who did *Superman* and *Star Wars*, he got quite a lot of recognition. But it depends on the sort of film. You've tried to break away from science fiction for obvious professional reasons.

I really do enjoy doing as many different subjects as possible and I have got away from science fiction. But I've been away from it long enough now that, if I were offered a science fiction film and it were the right one, I would do it. In my opinion, there's a lot of rubbish being made. I wouldn't do it just because it's science fiction. It would have to be the right one now.

*You want to go to America, do you?*

Yes. Oh yes.

**"I just want to be the best in my field."**

*Brian Johnson (see Starburst 9) told me he wanted to be a director. Is that the area you would like to head towards?*

I suppose we all have aspirations to be a director at one time or another. It doesn't worry me too much. If the right project came along and I was in a position to direct it, I would like to do it. But I wouldn't necessarily go out of my way. I just want to be the best in my field.

*Maybe you are.*

Not quite. (Laughs.) Not yet. I haven't reached what I want to reach. I want to get the Oscar, obviously. I want to get the awards and I haven't done that yet.

*You virtually have to go to America to do a film before you get an Oscar, though, don't you?*

The costume designer for *Death on the Nile* got the Oscar this year. British. Ken Adams got the Oscar for *Barry Lyndon*. British. John Barry got it last year for *Star Wars*. British. We have the best technicians in the world.

*You seem to be one of that very rare breed: a satisfied person.*

I'm satisfied with what I am. I just want to be better at it and keep on doing it and getting better. Each film I do I want to be better than the last one.



The week-end set-up for a photograph on one of the miniature sets designed by Keith Wilson.

Since Richard Matheson wrote his classic sf tale *I am Legend* in 1954 there have been two screen versions of the story. The first, *Last Man on Earth*, starred Vincent Price and strayed far from Matheson's original premise. Seven years later Charlton Heston appeared in the 1971 version.

# THE OMEGA MAN

Feature by Tise Vahimagi

"As far as *The Omega Man* is concerned, I had nothing to do with it and am quite proud on that point," firmly states author and screenwriter Richard Matheson. The distinct denial of responsibility from Matheson refers to the 1971 film version of his novel *I Am Legend*—a novel of intense paranoia and chilling atmosphere.

*The Omega Man*, when first released, came under heavy fire from Matheson and science-fantasy buffs who were outraged at the film's variation of the original story.

Richard Matheson was born in Allendale, New Jersey, on February 20, 1926. He attended the Brooklyn High School and, later, the University of Missouri where he graduated with a Bachelor of Journalism degree. His first story, *Born of Man and Woman*, appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1949. Since that time Matheson has become one of the most creative and imaginative minds at work in the science-fantasy field; his novels and short-story collections include *Someone is Bleeding*, *The Shrinking Man*, *Hell House*, *Shores of Space*, *Third From the Sun* and many more.

In 1954, Matheson wrote a gripping novel about one man's struggle to survive in a world inhabited by vampires following the outbreak of bacteriological warfare, and leaving the central character (called Robert Neville) an outcast in this society—as well as a potential victim—simply for being a normal human being. The novel was entitled *I Am Legend*.

Much has been made of the "abortive"







Above: Neville (Charlton Heston) is put on trial by Zerkovs (Lincoln Kirkpatrick, left) and Matthews (Anthony Zerbe, right) for crimes of "Medicine science weapons machines" and his treachery. Below: Neville is captured by members of the Family in their own apartment.



attempts to translate Matheson's story to the screen, with scriptwriters and directors condemned and criticised for either deviating from the original story or simply making a "lousy" job of the film. Of course, it is a natural assumption that the author who penned the original story should—especially if he has proved himself skilful in the area of screenwriting also—be commissioned to work on the film script of his own novel. However, this point of "perfection" is not always possible so other writers take over and create what they "see" in the story.

In 1957 Hammer Films acquired the screen rights to *I Am Legend* and shipped Matheson over to write the screenplay. Unfortunately, when the finished script was submitted to the British Board of Film Censors (cheaper than shooting an entire film and then having the Censor demand several cuts and changes) they wouldn't pass it due to some violent and bloody scenes and the Matheson draft hit the storeroom shelf. He returned to the USA and proceeded to turn out the series of excellent Edgar Allan Poe movies for Roger Corman at AIP.

Hammer sold the property to Lippert Films, in America, and Matheson once again became involved when he was informed that the film would be directed by distinguished German director Fritz Lang (of *Metropolis* fame). Again, the movie version developed problems, and B-movie director Sidney Salkow was finally hired to shoot the film; Salkow in turn hired William P. Leicester to rewrite Matheson's script and, in Matheson's own words, "he really screwed it

up." Matheson had become so disillusioned by this time that he has his pen name, "Logan Swanson," put on the film's credits.

In 1964, *The Last Man on Earth* was released, starring Vincent Price as the central character, now renamed Robert Morgan. This version, despite maintaining a gothic feel of vampires, stakes and garlic, was immediately pounced upon and criticised for its dereliction of story basis and general shoddiness.

The same attitude of the critics was aimed, in 1971, at *The Omega Man* with everyone spitting venom at this second "version" of *I Am Legend*. A certain percentage of the criticism levelled at *The Omega Man* is quite justified, as the film does deserve some flak for not being honest with itself and for not adhering in a true fashion to the Matheson story.

However, *The Omega Man* has not so much produced a sloppy, inept version of the original story as created a *new* story, utilising the original Matheson theme. Thus, *The Omega Man* must be judged and evaluated as a film in its own right, and not as some failed attempt at visualising a classic of modern sf literature.

Shortly after germ warfare between Russia and China has caused a widespread plague Robert Neville (played by Charlton Heston) drives through the deserted streets of Los Angeles. Abandoned cars are visible everywhere and bodies are slumped haphazardly on sidewalks and against buildings.

As twilight falls Neville speeds to a tall apartment building, and is relieved to have



arrived before dark. As he drives into the underground garage he is attacked by several black-robed creatures. He kills those who have entered the garage and locks several more outside.

After checking the generator which provides the building with power, Neville unlocks the elevator and ascends to his fortress-apartment which is part home, part laboratory. As he sits down to have a drink in his elegant living quarters Neville hears eerie cries from the street below shrieking: "Nevillle . . . Comouuuut here. Nevillle, you're going to diiiiie." He pays them little attention for he has heard them often, but as they continue their imprecations Neville begins a one-sided dialogue with the creatures outside, berating them for having destroyed libraries, laboratories and museums.

In the dark street in front of Neville's building the black-robed figures, human but with white skin, white hair and eyes shielded by sunglasses with reflecting lenses, are burning books and wrecking scientific equipment. This is the Family, which includes Matthias (*Anthony Zerbe*) the leader and Zachary (*Lincoln Kilpatrick*) who are causing this destruction because they believe that technology is the curse which has brought them to their current state. They are the survivors, along with Neville, of the bacteriological war between Russia and China which has decimated the world's population.

In his laboratory in a hospital before the world was ravaged by the plague, Neville was watching a television newscast of the

Russian-Chinese conflict being announced by Matthias, who was then a news commentator, when the telephone rang. Neville was called to present the anti-plague vaccine which he had developed but the helicopter in which he was being transported crashed and Neville injected himself with one remaining dose, making him the only human immune to the plague.

At Neville's apartment house Matthias, who is still burning books, leads the Family in an attack on the building with blazing missiles. The creatures, who cannot tolerate light, are kept away from the building by giant spotlights. Neville shoots several of the attackers ending the siege.

During the day, Neville searches the apparently empty city looking for the "nest" where Matthias and the Family live. As he is searching a clothing store he sees what appears to be a female Negro mannikin move. The beautiful girl, the first person Neville has seen in almost two years, eludes him.

Tired from chasing the girl Neville stops in a bar and pours himself a drink. In the wine cellar, where he has gone to investigate a noise, Neville stumbles on the sleeping Family and is captured by the creatures.

At a "trial" Matthias tells Neville that he is a relic of a destructive scientific society and finds him guilty of "medicine, science, weapons, machines and electricity." Matthias stakes Neville to the ground in a large stadium in which the Family is gathered, but before the sentence can be carried out the stadium lights come on unexpectedly and the Family retreats in

agony.

Neville is released by Dutch (*Paul Koslo*) who leads him to Lisa (*Rosalind Cash*), the beautiful girl he saw in the store window. The three escape on a motorcycle and go to a house where eight other young survivors of the plague are living.

Since Lisa's brother Richie (*Eric Laneville*) is showing the first symptoms of the disease which turns people into light-sensitive psychotics like the Family, Neville and Lisa take him to Neville's laboratory hoping to save him. Using his own blood, Neville develops a serum which gradually returns the boy to his normal condition.

As Neville plans to inoculate Lisa, who may also have contracted the plague, and then take the entire group to a safer part of the country, Richie goes to convince the Family that they can be cured by Neville's serum. Neville follows him to the Court Building where the Family lives. Richie is killed by Matthias who then takes the Family out to find Neville. Lisa, who has gone out for food, sees the Family and, "having gone over" to them, as Neville feared she might, joins them.

Returning home after discovering Richie's body Neville finds Lisa, her skin and eyes completely white, in his apartment. The entire Family is with her. They destroy Neville's apartment and laboratory but he escapes with a bottle of serum, taking Lisa with him. They dash into the street as the first rays of the sun chase the Family into hiding, but Matthias kills Neville with a spear tossed from the building.

Dutch and the other youngsters arrive



and save the serum and Lisa. They drive off with the body of Neville who has, perhaps, made them safe for the future.

Shot in a subtle Technicolor by Russell Metty, the film is a visually disturbing and moodily atmospheric piece. The opening shots, when one doesn't really know what to expect, are effectively conveyed by scenes of deserted city streets, scattered with litter and derelict cars lit only by the soft amber rays of the sun glinting off office-block windows. When we pick up on the Heston character he drives calmly through the city streets until he notices the setting sun, glances at his watch and curses to himself for staying out too long. We watch, somewhat puzzled, as he wildly races his car through the streets. The curious thing is that the audience already find themselves desperately involved in Heston's mysterious race against time.

It is not until Heston arrives at his apartment building and is suddenly attacked by hooded figures that we know the reason for his anxiety.

Because of the nature of Heston's one-man, self-supporting fortress and the uniformity of his antagonists the film exists as a fantasy actioner, far removed from the characters in *I Am Legend*; the character of Neville in *The Omega Man* moves about the city with all the confidence and determination of a Clint Eastwood gunfighter in a strange town. The closest we get to understanding or knowing anything of Heston's personal character come in the few moments when he plays chess with a bust of Julius Caesar, the flashback to before the

catastrophic event and, later, when he becomes emotionally involved with Rosalind Cash.

Most of his daylight hours are spent ruthlessly hunting down the mutant disciples of Matthias. Besides his own fortified apartment—which itself is dimly lit inside and luridly decorated—Heston's world consists of dark rooms and cellars, decaying houses and corpse-filled hospitals where he pursues the hooded figures. The theme is more gothic than scientific, and this is the nearest we get to the "feel" of Matheson's original story.

Unfortunately, the film weakens somewhat when Rosalind Cash, Paul Koslo and the company of kids are introduced. They may represent a deep meaning of survival for the human race to the Heston character but the token black heroine, the hippyish Dutch and the set of "appealing" orphans do little to sustain the mood and elevate the narrative flow, or speed the action along. These characters, unfortunately, function as fodder for moments of jeopardy; the kid-brother Richie's naive wanderings through Matthias's forbidding Court House maze and Rosalind Cash's eventual transformation into one of the albino mutants.

Another sequence which the film could have done quite happily without reveals Heston in a deserted movie-house running, of all things, *Woodstock* for himself. This presumably works under the assumption that all was "love and peace and flowers" before man used technology against humanity.

By way of visual action, it may be

Far left: *The Family* goes on a spree of destruction. Centre: Neville is threatened by the suspicious Lisa. Top: Director Boris Segal. Above: An unidentified technician takes a light reading on the set.

acceptable to see Heston casually select for himself a new car from a showroom and cheerfully drive it out through the large display windows, but when the motorcycle stunts start coming along the movie tends to rely too much on James Bond-like thrills and loses much of its confined atmosphere.

Despite Heston's final matter-of-fact incident of death by spear, his body forming a bizarre scene of crucifixion against a piece of cross-like sculpture, *The Omega Man* contains enough exciting moments and eerie scenes (black-hooded torch-bearers wandering the dark streets, etc) to make the film an authentic chiller in its own right and on its own ground.

#### The Omega Man (1971)

Charlton Heston (as Robert Neville), Anthony Zerbe (Matthias), Rosalind Cash (Lisa), Paul Koslo (Dutch), Lincoln Kilpatrick (Zachary), Eric Laneuville (Richie), Jill Giraldo (Little Girl), Anna Aries (Woman in Cemetery Crypt), Brian Tochi (Tommy), Devereen Brookwater, John Dietkes, Monika Henreid, Linda Redfearn and Forrest Wood (Family Members). Directed by Boris Sagal, Screenplay by John Williamson and Joyce B. Corrington, Photography by Russell Metty, Art direction by Arthur Loei and Walter M. Smeadows, Film Editor William Ziegler, Music by Ron Grainer, Makeup by Gordon Bau, Produced by Walter Seltzer, Technicolor. Time: 98 mins.

Cert: A.

# • THINGS • TO • C

Our regular monthly look at science fiction in films and television, compiled by Tony Crawley.

## CLAWS OF THE CAT

We've had the birds, rats, bees, and sharks, make ready for our furry, feline friends to go on the rampage. (Actually, we've had cats already in *Eye of the Cat* in 1969, but now Hollywood's Charles Fries (*The Martian Chronicles*) and the ex-Amicus man, Max J. Rosenberg have dug up the notion of killer

cats in *Claws*. It's very much Daphne du Maurier re-written, as a small town, a slumbering seaside community's tranquility uprooted by hordes of berserk felines attacking the unsuspected with tooth and bloody claw. Director Tony Ganz is no Hitchcock though. Or not yet. Good practise though for Fries's forthcoming re-make of Val Lewton's *The Cat People*.

not every kitten  
is a pussycat

# CLAWS



## ANDERSON'S MOVIE

Top British sf tv producer Garry Anderson is back in the science fiction movie game with a \$12-million space thriller called *Five Star Five*—a sort of *Where Eagles Dare* in outer space. (I wonder what *Eagles* writer Alistair MacLean will make of that). Pre-production is already well underway before co-producer Sydney Rose (of The Who's *The Kids Are Alright*) went to Hollywood to secure five names and a director.

The real shooting begins at Pinewood studios in October for 17 weeks, with a further twenty reserved for special effects.

Garry Anderson, who wrote the script with Tony Barwick, is the man behind such tv successes as *Thunderbirds*, *UFO* and most recently, *Space 1999*. On tv, he works. In films... well. His last big space movie, *Doppelgänger*, was less than a hit, but we wish him luck, nevertheless.

## TIGHT SECURITY

Alien, as we know, has been doing *Star Wars* business in America. But the FBI are still stumped. So far, there have been no reports of Ridley Scott's film being sold in pirate form. Presumably, 20th Century Fox has stepped up security at cinemas around the country. Until recently, you could pick up a pirated cassette of *Star Wars* for \$300; *Superman*, though, had dropped like a stone—a giveaway at a hundred bucks.

## SUPER HERO

A brand new superhero has been found by American television. Are you ready for... *The Brown Hornet*? That's right. Brown. Not Green like Bruce Lee's old sidekick. Comic Bill Cosby is behind the find—part of his Filmaton cartoon tv series, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. This gang always rushes back to their clubhouse to watch *The Brown Hornet* on the box. It's a five minute spot within the show, with a moral for the later activities of the clan. Now, Filmaton is thinking of letting the Hornet spread his wings into a full 30-minute show of his own. Trouble is, we'll never see it here, I'm sure. We've never seen *Fat Albert* and Co, and they're into their ninth year now.

## NOT SO SUPER

Universal-MCA refuses to let a good idea die. *The Bionic Man* is dead—long live *The Ultimate Imposter*. Unfortunately, for those in the Universal corridors of power the title is all too accurate. The tv pilot was a complete dud. Newcomer Joseph Hacker is the hero. Chemically brainwashed by the Chinese, he can be programmed with new skills every week by his US Intelligence chief, Keith Andes. *Buck Rogers'* girl-soldier Erin Gray was also involved. So what? As good as Andes was, nothing could save this mix of *Mission Impossible* and the *Bionic Man*. (The old *Mission Impossible* boss man, Peter Graves, enters the sf fray, by the way, in *Clonus*, with Kennan Wynn and Dick Sargent. Their director is Robert Fiveson.

## SUPER POWER

And yet another bionic re-tread is afoot, *The Power Within*. Despite the flop of *The Clone Master*, Canadian actor Art Hindle tries a second time for fantasy success in this tv pilot from the folk behind *Stargate* and *Hutch*. Hindle is a six-million-dollar man at cut rates. As a stunt pilot, he survives a lightning attack and discovers he has the ability to project electric waves from his hands. Naturally enough, he immediately begins using this new found power to defend truth, justice and the American way.



# OME•THINGS•T



## SISTERS

Cartwright-on! The Cartwright girls are looking good. Well, they always were beautiful babies, but baby—look at them now. Angela, in particular, the one-time Penny Robinson moppet in Irwin Allen's 83 episodes of *Lost in Space* (1965-68) has now blossomed into Irwin Allen's juvenile romantic lead in *Beyond The Poseidon Adventure*. Her saviour in the upside-down ship is Mark Harmon, from the *Centennial* series.

Angela's big sister, Veronica (30 this year) has similarly grown up from her Bristol-born

roots, six-year-old fame as the Kellogg's girl in US commercials, the spiteful blackmailer in *The Children's Hour* at 12, Rod Taylor's young sister in Hitchcock's *The Birds* at 13, and her more recent adventures in Phil Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to be in the film of the year... She's the navigator for the ill-fated crew of the *Nostramo* in Ridley Scott's *Alien*.

into something else. *Point Blank* (1967) follows the pattern of the classic Grail quest. I've used it as an archetypal storyline in a lot of my work—*Zardoz* (1974), for instance."

He wrote one script at least five years ago, tentatively announced as a film for two of his previous stars Sean (Zardoz) Connery and Lee Marvin from both *Point Blank* and *Hell in the Pacific* (1968), plus Max Von Sydow as Merlin. His new version, written two years back with Rospo Pallenberg, will not feature either actor and avoids the usual visual characterisations. Boorman's Merlin will be seen at 40, for instance, not as a Santa Claus look-alike. Two actors will portray King Arthur as teenager and as a man, and the movie will present the Arthurian legend from start to finish—from Arthur's birth, through his rise to kingship, the triangular entanglement with Guenevere and

her knightly lover Sir Lancelot, the formation of the Knights of the Round Table, the inevitable quest for the Holy Grail and on to Arthur's demise. Sounds enough there for two movies, but Boorman feels he can condense it into two hours. "A character study of flesh and steel. The three primary elements are adventure, magic and romance!" Plus a lot of action—martial arts, Camelot style—and special effects for Merlin's magic.

Having apparently sat around for so long on his movie dream—winning as Paramount, producer Martin Poll and the Summer and Edwin Brown team of San Francisco announced their respective Merlins—Boorman was in fact continuing to burnish his scenario... and hope. Ironically, what propelled him into action, one last push for backing, was the Cannes announcement of Ridley Scott's new movie: *The Knight*. Ironic, because three years ago Boorman first announced his Merlin movie at Cannes, since when—nothing. But then, John has not had a big hit for some time, while Scott's latest film happens to be a little something called... *Alien*.

Some felt that the flop of John's *Exorcist II—The Heretic* had killed off his hopes for *Merlin* forever. He disagrees. The sequel, he says, made its money back with the take of \$14-million in the United States and \$8-million elsewhere and as a result he'd received more offers from Warner Brothers than from any other studio. "In some ways, a lot of my films have been in preparation for *Merlin*. Even *The Heretic* gave me a lot of experimentation in visual techniques." (Seemed to do Richard Burton some good too; his latest film is the very Arthurian *Tristan and Isolt*).

Now it's Steven Spielberg's turn to be stymied... He had contacted Boorman in Ireland about a *Merlin* movie, based on *The Hollow Hills* and other Mary Stewart books. Spielberg is now leaving the way clear for John. Let's hope Paramount, Poll and the Browns do likewise. After all this wait, the last thing we need is a sudden glut of Merlins on our screens.

## MERLIN IS GO!

At long last John Boorman has finalised a \$10-million go-ahead for his *Merlin* project, first mentioned as far back as *Starburst* 4 (November 1978). On October 1 he starts shooting *Merlin* and *The Knights of King Arthur* with English and Irish locations. His backers are the new Orion combine (known as son of United Artists), for world release by the brothers Warner. The film has been a 20-year obsession with the director and this go-situation should mean the quick demise of at least four other Hollywood Merlin projects... including one from Steven Spielberg.

"The Holy Grail legend has been a tremendous influence on my work," Boorman says from his home in Wicklow. "I've tried various ways of doing the story but it usually turned

## REALLY SHRINKING

Second Thoughts Dept. Lily Tomlin's plan to re-make *The Incredible Shrinking Man* as *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* are back on schedule again. Following her massive flop with *Moment By Moment* with John Travolta, the idea was dropped by the boys at Universal. Now it's on again, but only after shrinking the overblown budget of \$14-million down to six. "It's to be a pure comedy with controllable special effects," says the Universal president Ned Tannen. The original choice of director, John Landis, has since departed, now Joel Schumacher has the job. Scripts are by Jerry Belson and Lily's usual collaborator, Jane Wagner—director of that Travolta flop.

# • THINGS • TO • C



## CHEAP SPACEMAN

Visage. Not all the best space monster make-up happens for the spectacular biggies. This chap, for instance, appears in an American exploitation movie, rejoicing in the title of *Wham, Bam, Thank You Spaceman*...! Story revolves

around a UFO romeo, if you please, and features John Ireland Jr in the cast. (His father can't complain; he appeared in *The Shapes of Things to Come!*) For the record, someone called William A. Levy produced and directed—and this rather neat make-up job was created by Mervin Mantoff. Good work!

## OBITUARY

Although days behind schedule, shooting on *The Empire Strikes Back* halted all afternoon, June 11, for the funeral of the film's design consultant and Oscar-winner for his *Star Wars* production design: John Barry. As well as producer Gary Kurtz and the entire *Empire* cast and crew, Stanley Kubrick and many of his team from *The Shining* attended the service plus Warner Brothers' executives. As a production designer, he was a giant.

Few, if any of his mourners, had fully recovered from the dreadful shock of John's sudden—almost freakish—death on June 1. Gary Kurtz recalls John had turned up for work on May 31, complaining of a headache. Later his temperature was recorded at 105 degrees. He died at 2am next morning from a bacterial strain of a brain-membrane disease. The diagnosis, it seems, was simple. No one else on the unit contracted any similar ill-health, although two technicians were reportedly under observation for a while before being released.

John Barry, 43, had lately rejoined his *Star Wars* colleagues on the sequel production, soon after being non-voluntarily removed from his directing debut of his own script, *Saturn 3*, at Shepperton. He was appointed design consultant on *Empire*, and had just been made second-unit director when he died. To say his death is a massive blow for the British film industry sounds trite, but in his case, it happens to be true.

Barry was an architect who did stage design work as a sideline. He started in films at the

top—on *Cleopatra*, as a draftsman dealing with props. He continued working in television, until becoming assistant to Elliott Scott, MGM's British art director. During this period he worked on *Operation Crossbow*, *Nine Hours To Rama*, *The Mercenaries* and the full-fated *Man's Fate*. In 1968, he made his debut as a solo production designer with *Decline and Fall*. He did pre-production work on yet another cancelled venture, Kubrick's *Napoleon*; and finally worked with Kubrick on *A Clockwork Orange*. His other films include: *Kelly's Heroes*, *Sitting Target*, *The Little Prince*, *Saul Bass' Phase IV* and *Lucky Lady*... made on location in Mexico, where Gary Kurtz flew down from Hollywood to talk to him about *Star Wars*.

"I picked him," says Kurtz, "because apart from his artistic abilities, I felt he could handle the logistics of a multi-set picture." *Star Wars* occupied all nine sound stages at the EMI-Elstree studio, housing Barry's 30 sets of planets, starships, caves, control rooms, cantinas, and that much ripped off network of corridors on the Death Star.

"These films," adds Kurtz, "call for a designer to be both architect and contractor—the art department staff numbered 300. John was exceptional on the planning side, doing the best possible with the budget. And another reason I hired him was on personality. We all mourn him. Apart from his exceptional talent to which the success of *Star Wars* owed much, he was the most lovely of men, who carried very lightly and disarmingly his great wealth of experience and creativity. He was part of our *Star Wars* family."

## MASTERS' DEBUT

Veteran art director Tony Masters—Oscar-nominated for his work on 2001—is producing and directing his first movie. Title: *The Beckoning*. Genre: Science fantasy adventure. What else? The story is secret, and stems from Tony himself, though the screenplay is by actor James Booth, whose *Sunburn* was recently well-oiled by Farrah Fawcett Majors in Acapulco. Must be a good yarn, it's the first film to be backed by Casablanca Film Works since *Midnight Express*.

## DISNEY SPACE

The Walt Disney combine are still promising everything with their *Black Hole* sf movie—to be premiered in New York on December 21. The studio hype insists that this film "will surpass the mind's conception of even the most extraordinary of science-fiction extravaganzas." Audiences "will find themselves in the great lap of the Universe—wide-eyed, ready and waiting for what lies beyond." Five years in the planning and 15 months in post-production, the visuals are being further enhanced by a new \$100,000 computer-controlled camera system created in the matte department for the \$18-million venture. Called Matte Scan, this system combines several live-action scenes on one matte painting—"and in such a way," says Harrison Ellenshaw, head of the Disney Matte Dept., "that the shots can be panned, tilted or zoomed with great accuracy."

## EMPIRE

Harley Cokliss will certainly remember mid-1979 as "that summer"... First, his debut feature, *That Summer*, flopped so loudly, the death rattle could be heard all the way to Australia. Second, he got the break of his life, being made second-unit director on *The Empire Strikes Back*. That'll keep him busy until *Thorogor* gets underway. If ever. The problem, I gather, is not so much the script as the scriptwriter(s)...

Meanwhile, *The Empire Strikes Back* is a hit already. The *Star Wars* sequel doesn't open until May 2, 1980. But so far, American cinema chains have guaranteed \$26-million in order to play it at their friendly, neighbourhood theatres.

## SUPERCASH

It's a bird, it's a plane. No it's a record! It's now official. *Superman* has taken more money in the Americas than any other Warner Brothers premier-release. The film moved into the top spot on its first release gathering \$68,102,354—which beats *The Exorcist*'s first release run's total of \$66,715,122. And it's not finished yet. It is expected to catch up with the current *Exorcist* total (after a third re-issue) of \$82,832,645.

# OME•THINGS•

## MAGIC!

Now, you'd believe a carpet can fly. **Arabian Adventure** from the ever-dependable team of director Kevin Connor and producer John Dark lives up to all expectations as a delightful family adventure, a *Star Wars* on flying carpeting. Wall

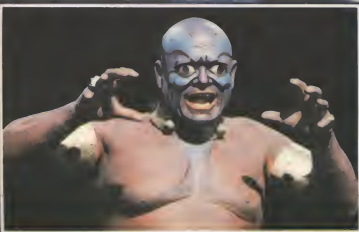
to wall effects and immense fun. More important still, a lack of pretension. Chris Lee is a great evil sorcerer. Peter Cushing, Milo O'Shea, Capucine, and even Mickey Rooney are also embroiled in the late Brian Hayles' script. Oliver Tobias and Emma Samms are the young lovers and moppet Puneet Sira stole what was left of the movie as is the right of all cute orphan

lads. I liked the make-job job on Milton Reed's bad-news jinnee (or gani), but the special effects guys take the cake. Full praise to George Gibbs, Richard Conway, David Harris, process photographer Charles Staffell and matte-man Cliff Culley for a stunning variety of mechanical monsters, and some excellent travelling mattes!



Heroine Emma Samms.

Above: One of the most spectacular travelling mattes seen in recent cinema! Below right: Director Kevin Connor on the set of *Arabian Adventure*. Below left: Milton Reed as the menacing gani.



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# STARBURST LETTERS

As creator of the *BBC Space Themes* record reviewed in the Vol 1 No 10 issue of *Starburst* I would like to thank you and reviewer Ken Howes for the favourable comments. However there are a couple of points I feel could be expended on—just for the record!

We attempted to use the original recordings where ever possible for, I feel, otherwise there is no point in doing the record. But sometimes a compromise has to be reached. The most obvious change from the original on the record is of course the *Star Trek* theme, but the original never has been released for a commercial recording, so we had to settle for a cover version, and at least the Johnny Keating version is in the right mood.

The tv themes specifically written for the appropriate programmes, in particular *Dr Who*, *Blake's 7* and *Moonbase 3* are strictly speaking not the actual recordings used to open and close the series. These would be so short and disjointed as to be unacceptable on disc. Instead a longer version was made, incorporating a middle section, and recorded in stereo, for the tv versions would be mono anyway. However, overall I think these can be regarded as the definitive versions.

The recording of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is the 2001 version, not the *Apollo Studios* version, which used a much older, probably mono recording. However as I mention both film and television in the notes, I hope this is acceptable.

Although *The Sky at Night's* music has not changed, the recording has over the years, but the version on the record is the one used at present.

Finally, and I'm afraid I have to disagree with the reviewer, the version of Aaron Copeland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* is the actual one used for the programme. Being involved with all the BBC coverage of the mission I can definitely vouch for this. Perhaps he was thinking of the Emerson, Lake and Palmer version used on the last Olympics?

*Fanfare* was actually started to be used, instead of *Zarathustra*, to introduce the *Apollo Studios* at the time of Apollo 13, but due to the problems with this mission, we reverted back to the latter as it was felt to be more immediately recognisable.

Could I also point out that due to misinterpretation, I receive an erroneous credit on the back of the record sleeve (it doesn't appear on the cassette). I didn't in fact design any of the spacecraft that appear on the cover, although I did construct 4 out of the 5.

Mat Irvine, Hertfordshire.

Thank you for sorting the discrepancies, Mat. And for those of you who don't recognise the name, Mat Irvine is the man responsible for the special effects of such BBC science fiction shows as *Blake's 7* and *Doctor Who*.

For some years now America has had the reputation of producing first rate tv science fiction and rarely has Britain gained the recognition it so richly deserves. The fact is, we can produce the best fantasy tv material in the world and everyone short of the hard-core Trekkie will admit that.

One only need compare the outputs of the two countries: *Blake's 7* was a show containing top-notch sf concepts, despite the weak production values. *The Survivors* was perhaps the first

successful attempt to bring non space opera sf to the tv screen. *Space 1999* was a show that, while imperfect, has been compared favourably to *Star Trek* (which is more than can be said for *Planet of the Apes*, *Logan's Run* and *Fantastic Journey*). UFO and all the Anderson Supermarionation productions and of course the world's greatest sf hero *Doctor Who* are all years ahead of anything coming out of the USA at the moment.

What do the Americans have to show for their big budgets and spectacular special effects? Well, there is *Supertrain* (snigger!), the aforementioned *Apes*, *Logan* and *Journey*, the laughable *Battlestar Galactica* and Irwin Allen's entertaining but ultimately embarrassing semi-sf shows like *Land of the Giants* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. Indeed, except for *Star Trek*, no continuing US sf show has been worthy of praise.

The sf fan must choose between intelligent plots and visually spectacular "junkfood for the mind". Perhaps other readers would like to air their views on this subject.

Matthew Waterhouse, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

It seems that you're getting just a bit too clever. Not so long ago I was tearing my brains apart trying to find of a brilliant suggestion for an article for *Starburst*.

Suddenly I had it. Why don't you feature a poster gallery—a collection of the best fantasy film-posters?

However, I was just looking for my pen when *Starburst* 10 passed me in the hall having been fired at supersonic speed through the letter-box.

Well, of course when I flicked through the magazine. Hey Presto—a poster gallery. Amazing!

Now that's what I call fast work—there's got an awful lot of magazines which respond to their readers' letters before they're written!

Well, I thought, if I want my name in print I've got to be a bit quicker. So my next "stop-press suggestion": Why don't you and your film loving staff get together and compile a monthly *Starburst* Top Ten—a chart of—in *Starburst's* opinion (or perhaps us readers could compile our own, send them in and you take the mode)—a chart of the best ten fantasy films on release in Britain. Worth thinking about, eh? And don't tell me you thought of it first!

See you at the FFC.

Steve Blakemore, Southampton, Hants.

Your review in *Starburst* 9 of *Doctor Who* and the *Sontaran Experiment* was most unfair. Why do you refer to it as "basic" science fiction. The *Doctor Who* books cannot compare to Tolkien but neither are they limited to being read only by youngsters. You say "it is only BBC budgetary restrictions that keeps *Dr Who* and its children's viewing time". *Doctor Who* is shown between *Grandstand* and *Saturday Night at the Movies* which is a family slot. I have been a member of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society for sometime and most of its members are over twelve. The Society was started at a university after all!

Andrew Riistone, East Barnet, Herts.

Actually, Andrew, when Alex Carpenter said that

*Doctor Who* and the *Sontaran Experiment* was "Good, basic science fiction" he meant it as a compliment.

I have just read *Starburst* 8 and I have a few comments to make. In the book 21st Century Foss there are some brilliant full colour design drawings for the film *Alien*. In your article about the film Chris Foss is not mentioned. I am curious to know why especially as the illustration accompanying your feature looks like an illustration from the book.

Your article on the film *Manitou* was interesting. I am sure it will be well worth a visit to the cinema. Having said that, I realise that I can find no reason why a horror film should be reviewed in a science fiction/fantasy magazine. Surely these pages could have been put to better use?

The Gerry Anderson Interview was good but it should have been much longer. More on *Space 1999* please.

Your look at American magazines was interesting, although the review of *Ozma* was disgraceful. I have every issue of that highly informative magazine to date. This publication won an award with its first issue and is widely regarded throughout the world. It is quite obvious that Alex Carpenter has seen only that issue of *Ozma*. I suggest he examine the other issues. Then he can make a fairer evaluation.

Robert Mager, Grimsby, South Humberside.

Two points raised in your letter deserve an answer, Robert. The first is that all too often the fields of science fiction and horror overlap. In fact it seems reasonable to say that the term *fantasy* covers both genres anyway. But in saying you don't want to see horror covered in *Starburst* (even to the tune of 3 pages out of 38?) does this mean that you don't want to see coverage of *Alien*? And talking of *Alien*, the reason that Chris Foss was not mentioned in the article in *Starburst* 8 is that at the time it was uncertain just how many of Foss' designs would end up in the film. As it turned out, none did!

I would like, through your letters column, to thank Ian McLachlan for mentioning our club address in his letter. The response has been terrific, however many people neglect to enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and although we do try to answer these letters, the cost is exhausting club funds. So, please, could anybody writing to the *Doctor Who* Fan Club—or any other organisation for that matter—enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

I would also like to congratulate you on your brilliant magazine. Most of sf magazines seem to die after the first few issues but *Starburst* is still going strong. I feel this is due to the number of pictures you manage to cram into every issue, coupled with the great features which are much better than those in any other sf magazine. I thought that the Terry Nation Interview in *Starburst* 6 was excellent, especially the photo on page 7 of the camera crew actually at work. I hope that your brilliant magazine continues to thrive, and that you have more *Doctor Who* features. How about an interview with special effects man, Met Irving?

John Manning, Doctor Who Fan Club, Halifax.

# IRWIN ALLEN ALIENS

Feature by John Brosnan



For some time now everyone has been wondering how Irwin Allen was going to top *The Swarm* (the ultimate B movie) and at last we know—it's called *Beyond The Poseidon Adventure* and it's pure Irwin Allen all the way through . . .

Irwin Allen, in case you aren't familiar with the name, is the man who has done more to give science fiction a bad name than anyone else alive, with the possible exception of Bert I. Gordon (the only difference between them is that Allen spends more money on his productions).

Allen's career began back in the late 1930s when, as a mere youth of 22, he became the editor of a Hollywood magazine called *Key*. Within a year he was writing, directing and producing a weekly one-hour radio show which featured various Hollywood celebrities. It was a big success and ran for 11 years, leading to Allen being offered his own news column called "Hollywood Merry-Go-Round" which was soon appearing in 73 newspapers around the world.

In 1944, at the ripe old age of 28, Allen started a literary agency and was soon

representing such famous writers as P.G. Wodehouse and Ben Hecht. With the arrival of television Allen quickly made his mark on the new medium by devising the first celebrity panel game which, like his previous projects, proved very successful and has inspired countless imitations over the years (yes, it's indirectly due to Irwin Allen that such programmes as *Celebrity Squares* grace our video screens . . .)

In 1951 he began producing films for RKO, one of which was a documentary based on Rachel Carson's famous book *The Sea*

**Around Us.** This won him an Academy Award in 1953 and he tried to repeat the success with another slick pseudo-documentary called **The Animal World** in 1956, but the only good thing about it was the model animation by Willis H. O'Brien (of **King Kong** fame) and Ray Harryhausen. In the section dealing with prehistoric life. Then in 1957 he made what must rank as one of the looniest films of all time—**The Story of Mankind** (based on a book by someone actually called Hendrick Van Loon). It concerned a heavenly court being convened up in the clouds to determine whether or not mankind should be destroyed in an atomic war. The defense lawyer was played by Ronald Colman while Vincent Price, as the devil, played the prosecutor. As evidence they each presented some of "history's" better known events such as Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, Nero fiddling while Rome burns etc. If I tell you that Harpo Marx played Sir Isaac Newton you will get some indication of what the film was like.

After leaving this Indelible blot on the history of the cinema Allen produced the forgettable feature film **The Big Circus** in 1959 (directed by Joseph N. Newman). Then came the fateful day he planted his flag in science fiction territory—an annexation that the genre has never quite recovered from. His first sf effort was a limp remake of **The Lost World** in 1960 (see **Starburst** 12), followed by a sort of updated **Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea** called **Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea**. After making **Five Weeks in a Balloon** (it seemed longer) in 1962 he returned to television with a series based on his **Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea** feature film. It proved very successful and prompted him to produce other sf series, such as **Lost in Space** (see **Starburst** 10), **Time Tunnel** and **Land of the Giants**. Allen's approach to science fiction was a lazy one and basically consisted of camouflaging hackneyed plots and cardboard characters with lots of flashy special effects. The more coloured lights and explosions you had, he reasoned, the less you had to worry about in the script and acting departments. Unfortunately it was a formula that worked well for him and one that has been adopted by other producers of sf films and tv shows since then.

By the end of the 1960s, however, Allen's tv series were losing popularity and a new sf series he proposed, **City Beneath the Sea**, never got past the pilot stage (this was later unleashed upon an unsuspecting world as a feature film called **One Hour to Doomsday**). But like the natural survivor he is Allen bounced back with a new winning gimmick—the disaster movie—and was back on top in 1972 with **The Poseidon Adventure**. This, as you will all no doubt remember (and how could anyone forget?) was about a group of people who get trapped in an upturned ocean liner and are led to safety by Gene Hackman. As with Allen's sf movies and tv shows the special effects in **The Poseidon Adventure** were used to divert one's attention from the cliché-ridden plot and characters who were straight out of a tv soap opera. This formula worked even better in the more expensive and spectacular **The Towering Inferno**, though some of the credit should go to John Guillermin who directed much of the film (Allen should stick to producing and leave the directing to someone else, as in this case).

With **The Swarm** however Allen came unstuck—the script and the characters were

Opposite: Featured in **Beyond the Poseidon Adventure**, an everyday tale of up-side-down folk, are (left to right) Peter Boyle, Shirley Knight (almost hidden in background), Angela Cartwright, Michael Caine (helping unidentified passenger), Slim Pickens, and Sally Field. Below: From an early episode of **Lost in Space**, the Chariot faces a strange cyclops monster. Bottom: The passengers pass through the hanging cars set in **Beyond the Poseidon Adventure**.





Above: Sally Field clambors up for a it down? (a ladder while a group of passengers thrash about helplessly in the water. Right: The *Chariot* from *Lost in Space* trundles across a barren alien landscape.



as banal as ever but the bees themselves just weren't diverting enough to cover up this fact and the result was an exercise in mind-numbing boredom. By filming his latest effort *Beyond The Poseidon Adventure* he obviously hoped to make up lost ground by returning to something that was a proven success but once again he's come a cinematic cropper. Compared to the original film, which at least was moderately entertaining, this is a very inferior production. For one thing it seems a much cheaper film. You get this impression almost right from the start when you see a tug boat being rocked back and forth in front of a rear projection screen while being squirted from an off-camera hose at laughably predictable intervals. Inside this tug boat, which is supposed to be in a storm at sea, is Michael Caine as the captain (I'm getting worried about Mr Caine; this is the second Irwin Allen film he's starred in), Karl Malden as his trusty but ailing sidekick, and the gutsy Sally Field (the film's only real asset) as a girl along for the ride.

Caine and his motley crew drop anchor alongside the upturned hull of the S.S. Poseidon shortly after the survivors of the earlier movie have been airlifted to safety and decide to claim salvage rights on whatever valuables may be inside. But before they can begin the search they are interrupted by the arrival of Telly Savalas and a group of white-suited men who claim to be a medical team but are obviously a shady bunch of people (you can tell Savalas is playing a baddie this

time because he doesn't smile as much as usual).

They all enter the ship through the hole in the hull cut by the previous rescuers but haven't got far before they get trapped themselves. Then they start meeting what Allen and his writer, Nelson Gidding, apparently presume to be an interesting collection of colourful characters—a blind man (Jack Warden) and his loyal wife (Shirley Knight); a drunken Texas millionaire (*Slim Pickens*) who turns out to be a fraud; a bullying loud-mouth (Peter Boyle) who is obsessed with his nubile daughter's safety (the daughter is played by Angela Cartwright who used to be in Allen's *Lost in Space* series); a plain but brave nurse (*Shirley Jones*); a beautiful but treacherous mystery woman (Veronica Hamel) and a handsome young crewman (Mark Harmon)... all of whom missed being rescued by Gene Hackman in the other picture.

It's not long before Savalas and his henchmen reveal their true colours—it seems that he's there to recover some stolen plutonium hidden in the hold (presumably he plans to make his own atom bomb though for what purpose is never made clear) and a running battle develops between them and Caine's mob. But eventually Caine and some of the others make it up to the top again (or rather the bottom) and escape in the tug just in time to avoid being blown up with Savalas and friends when the ship explodes (at least that means there can't be another sequel).

As with *The Swarm* the effects aren't spectacular enough to overcome the boring predictability of the events and as I said above an aura of cheapness hangs over the whole film. The most visually impressive sequences have been lifted from *The Poseidon Adventure*—scenes of the upturned ship being shaken by internal explosions consist of one shot from the previous film being repeated again and again—and even the sets aren't as interesting because this time not much is made of the fact that everything is upside-down (except in one sequence where we see a number of cars chained to the "ceiling"), presumably because of lack of money.

What really worried me was just how the ship kept from sinking all that time—because surely as soon as the hole was cut into the hull all the trapped air in there, which was keeping it afloat, would have gone under quicker than a Bruce Forsyth one-man show on Broadway. But then a knowledge of basic science has never been one of Irwin Allen's strong points, as a look at any of his sf movies or tv shows will prove.

The other big question is whether Allen's career will continue on this downward path (*The Swarm* was a box office dud and so far *Beyond The Poseidon Adventure* hasn't done too well either) or will he bounce back to the top with his next big disaster *The Day the World Ended*? My guess is that he will. He's certainly done it enough times before, and while one may not like his films you've got to admire his audacity.



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# BOOK WORLD

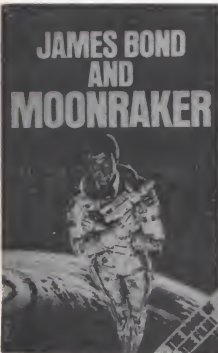
Reviews by Alex Carpenter

## JAMES BOND AND MOONRAKER

by Christopher Wood

As a long time fan of Ian Fleming's creation I cannot accept the movie incarnation as anything other than a parody. Although I could (just about) accept Sean Connery as 007, since Roger Moore took over the role the plots have become increasingly bizarre and lacking in seriousness. *Moonraker* goes further out than any of its predecessors and Christopher Wood's adaptation of his own screenplay seems devoid of any of the characteristics which made the Ian Fleming books such great reading.

With that off my chest, I must admit I found *James Bond and Moonraker* a highly entertaining read.



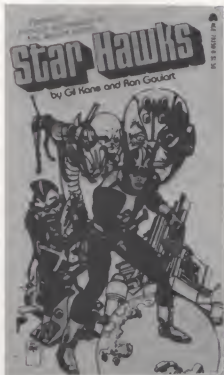
Published by Panther. 224 pages. 85p.

## STAR HAWKS

by Gil Kane and Ron Goulart

During 1977 Messrs Goulart and Kane got together to do a science fiction based, daily newspaper strip for the American market but it was to be a strip with a difference. No longer would they have to squeeze continuity and each day's plot development into a single bank (normally 3 frames); someone, some where, had been convinced that if you doubled the amount of space available you could more than double the readers daily enjoyment and so *Star Hawks* was born.

This book is a collection of the first 156 days and will appeal to the many American collectors of newspaper strips. In Britain, however, the readership will be much smaller as daily strips are not looked upon here with



the same regard as they are in the USA. But those among us who like their science fiction in strip-form might find it worth seeking out.

Ron Goulart is an author best-known for the quantity rather than the quality of what he has written. Though allowing for the restrictions of even this expanded version of the daily strip he has still managed to produce his usual competent standard of work.

Gil Kane's style can be seen at its best when detailing the dynamics of action sequences. This shows through clearly in *Star Hawks* but his imaginative use of layouts in space available makes every page interesting.

Published by Ace Books. 160 pages. \$1.50 Import.

## FANGORIA 1 edited by Joe Bonham

Finally, after a battery of legal hassles and some delay, *Starlog's* new magazine is with us. Its premier issue indicates that the publishers are definitely aiming at the horror market although at the same time they seem to be trying to reach a younger market than *Starlog* appeals to.

The format is very similar to its sister publication with 24 out of its 68 pages in colour. However I feel that 4 of its pages have been wasted as they have been used to form a pull-out Godzilla poster across the centre pages. As seems typical of posters that are included in magazines of this nature, the artwork is not particularly good and they would have been better off using the pages to increase editorial content.

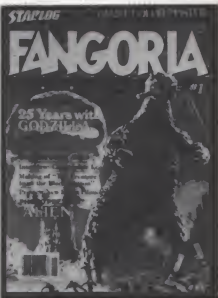
The main article is also about Japan's most popular monster.

Other features include an interview with *Flash Gordon* creator Alex Raymond, a behind-the-scenes look at the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, a short synopsis of Christopher Lee's career and a piece on *Dr Who*.

One thing that the publishers of *Starlog* et al seem unable to do is to produce a magazine purely about the movies. This is true of this new magazine where they have a four page colour feature entitled *Fantasticart* which, this issue, consists of Don Maiz's work.

Although I am disappointed with *Fangoria* I know that it will fill a gap left in the market in this country by the absence of *House of Hammer* although the more mature readers of that magazine will not find it as worthwhile. Its readers will include those who already read *Famous Monsters*. I feel that it will be more successful than *FM* because of the way it is marketed and packaged but I do not think that it will be able to compete with *Forie Ackerman's* magazine on coverage of films from the 1930s and 1940s.

Distribution has been confirmed for Britain and although I stated a price of 85p in my column in *Starburst* 8, this is now in doubt.



Published bi-monthly by O'Quinn Studios Inc. 68 pages. \$1.95 Import.

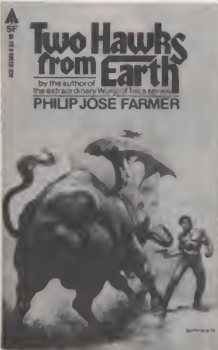
## TWO HAWKS FROM EARTH

by Philip Jose Farmer

1979 seems to be Philip Jose Farmer's year as another of his novels is re-issued. However, as could be expected of him, this is a re-issue with a difference. Although the original publication appeared under the title *The Gate Of Time*, this is not an attempt to mislead the public as the story has (a) had a portion edited out and replaced and (b) an ending that differs

from the original version.

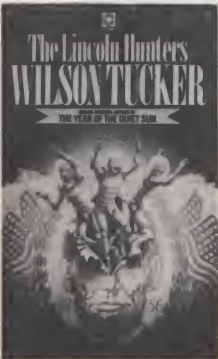
In his foreword the author claims that the original title was, in itself, deceptive as the story had nothing whatsoever to do with time travel and was in fact the story of an alternative Earth. It is also typical of Farmer that he has taken a great deal of care with the creation of this new version of our world and in doing so has made it all too credible.



Published by Ace Books. 320 pages. \$1.95 import.

#### THE LINCOLN HUNTERS by Wilson Tucker

Some years ago I read this author's *The Year Of The Quiet Sun*, which impressed me as an intelligently-written novel which used time



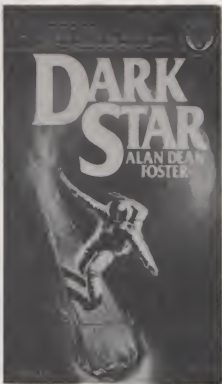
travel as its base and went much further than most tales of its type. **The Lincoln Hunters** is another time travel story and Tucker succeeds again without all the paradoxes and clichés which are the normal trappings of time travel stories.

Published by Coronet Books. 192 pages. 75p.

#### DARK STAR by Alan Dean Foster

When Dan O'Bannon and John Carpenter produced the movie upon which this book is based they presented the audience with a story of hilarious happenings on board an interstellar craft. Although Foster's book follows the same storyline I am left wondering whether he totally missed the comedy aspects of the film or whether he in fact managed to capture the real intent of Messrs O'Bannon and Carpenter.

**Dark Star** the novel is not an amusing book. It is rather a serious story about the paranoia



and anxiety that sets in amongst four men who have been cooped up in a space ship for years.

Alan Dean Foster has a reputation for enhancing any film novelisation he does, so perhaps it would have been impossible for him to have captured the zenianness of the movie and instead he decided to treat the subject in a serious manner. It is written to the standard that one has come to expect from him but fans of the film may be disappointed that the humour has been lost.

I understand that by the time this review sees print the book will be available in the UK but I do not have any further information at present.

Published by Ballantine. 192 pages. \$1.75 import.

#### MASTERWORKS by Jack Kirby

This is the sort of publication that is intended only for the truly completist comic fan but it comes at such a very high cover price I am none too certain that even they will find it essential to own a copy.

This is a collection of mainly unpublished pages of work that Jack Kirby has done over the years and as the book mostly comprises of pencil drawings it manages to show his work at its best. In the past few years it has become popular to knock Kirby's work but I feel that this is more for his (lack of) writing skills than for a lowering of the standards of his art. It is loosening up as the years have passed, but Kirby is still one of the true giants of comic book story-telling. This book is a tribute to his skills and includes an article on his career.



Published by Privateer Press. 52 pages. 11" x 16". \$10 import.

# INVADERS FROM MARS

Feature by Phil Edwards



*Young David MacLean, convinced that the flying saucer he saw land was more than a dream, tries to convince the police of what he saw. All the sets in *Invaders From Mars* have the same, pale, dream-like quality.*

**W**illiam Cameron Menzies' *Invaders From Mars*, released in 1953, is a unique contribution to the 50s Science Fiction boom. Taking a fairly average alien invasion story, Menzies created a dreamworld fantasy of invading Martians as seen through the eyes of a child and ended it on a note of twisted reality.

It tells the story of a youngster, David MacLean (*Jimmy Hunt*) whose father, rocket engineer George MacLean (*Leif Erikson*), is involved in a top secret government space project. David awakens one night to see a flying saucer land behind a

hill near his home. In a panic he rouses his parents who tell him it was only a dream. The next day David persists that he wasn't dreaming and to placate him, his father goes out to the spot to investigate and is gone for several hours. When he returns, he is hard and cold towards his wife, Mary (*Hillary Brooke*), and even knocks his son to the floor in a rage. David is upset and hurt at the change in his father, but notices a small scar at the base of his father's skull. MacLean tells his son that he scratched himself on the barbed wire fence. But David is suspicious. Taking his telescope to look at the site from

a safe distance he is in time to see a young girl, Kathy Wilson (*Janice Perreau*), the daughter of another of the project's scientists, disappear from view into the sandpits near the hill. At the same time, David hears a weird "singing" sound. She too returns several hours later, controlled in the same way as David's father, and sets fire to her parents' house. Before long, other people including David's mother and police officers who have come to investigate, suffer the same fate, and all have a similar scar to David's father. In desperation, David goes to the Chief of Police, only to discover that



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he too has been "taken over". David is locked in a cell to await the arrival of his parents. The desk sergeant, who remains uncontrolled, takes pity on him and calls Dr Patricia Blake (*Helena Carter*) to come to see the child. After carefully examining her neck for the telltale scar, he tells her his story. She is impressed enough by his sincerity and very real terror when his parents arrive to take him into her care on the pretext that he shows all the symptoms of polio, defying both his parents and the Chief of Police. They warn her that he fills his head with stupid science fiction stories and comic books.

Dr Blake takes David to see astronomer, Dr Stuart Kelston (played by Arthur Franz, veteran of several 50s science fiction movies). He is open minded enough to believe David's story and knows that the youngster is genuinely interested in science fact and not fiction. Kelston shows him various maps and charts of the Universe and then several models of UFOs and David identifies the type he saw land near his home. Kelston then trains the observatory telescope on the Martian landing site and sees David's father leading General Mayberry, who is also on the rocket project, along the path to the sandpits. When Kelston sees Mayberry disappear from sight, apparently swallowed up by the sands, he immediately calls Colonel Fielding (Morris Ankrum, who in 1956 would suffer again at the hands of alien invaders in Ray Harryhausen's *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers*) in Washington. The army is called in to blast away at the sandpits, but discover that the Martians are constantly moving their base. Drilling into the sand and rock with a ray gun that seals off their last base, the invaders leave nothing but sealed chambers of heat-blistered rock.

Meanwhile, the people that are controlled by the Martians attempt to sabotage the rocket project. David's father, aided by his wife, attempts to assassinate his co-worker, Dr William Wilson (Robert Sharpe, Inspector Henderson of the *Superman* television series), but fails. When another of the Martian controllers is found dead, it is discovered that the scar they all carry is the result of a Martian operation and that a small electrode has been inserted into their brains. Once they have served their purpose, it is detonated, causing a massive cerebral haemorrhage and instantaneous death.

David becomes terrified that his parents will suffer the same fate. Dr Blake tells him that his parents are in hospital and that they are going to be operated on to remove the Martian device, but she and David are captured by mutants—huge lumbering servants of the head Martian. While Dr Blake is readied for the operation, David rages at the Martian leader, a gold-green hued disfigured head with a withered body, sporting six tentacles, and sealed in a glass, bowl-like dome. It doesn't speak, but



David MacLean awakens to see a flying saucer landing, but on wakening his father he is told that it was all a dream.

telepathically instructs the Mutants to move it around, with the mere flicker of the eyes.

Meanwhile, Kelston and Colonel Fielding finally locate the Martian stronghold and a pitched battle ensues between the Mutants and the army. But bazookas and grenades are no match for the Martian ray guns and just as it seems that the Martians have won the battle, David wakes screaming from his dream. His parents rush into his room and reassure him that it was all only a nightmare. As David settles down to sleep again, we see through the boy's window the approach of the saucer and dream becomes reality...

*Invaders From Mars* began as a story idea around 1949 in the fertile imaginations of John and Rosemary Battle. Both were great fans of the science fiction "pulp" like *Amazing Science Fiction* and *Amazing Stories Magazines*. Both had worked with Orson Welles' *Mercury Theatre*, and Welles was already famous for his outlandish assault on the aural senses with his radio production of *War of the Worlds* (see *Starburst* 4). Both Battles were also involved in Welles' live magic shows, so they were no strangers to the bizarre. Utilising various ideas from Rosemary's dreams, and ideas arising from their discussions on the possibilities of an alien invasion, John Battle wrote a story called simply *The Invaders*. In 1950, independent producer Edward Alpersen bought the rights to the Battles' story, however, he found the original screenplay, which included a saucer 60 miles in diameter, beyond the budget he would allow the film. He signed William Cameron Menzies to direct and design the production, and the film took a further two and a half years of

re-writing by Menzies and screenwriter Richard Blake, before it went into production. In the finished film, it is only Richard Blake who is credited as writer.

The movie went before the cameras on September 25, 1952, at the Republic Studios, home of 'B' features and serials. Photographed by John Seitz in the old Cinecolor process, it had been planned to film in 3D, but this was considered too costly. However, through Menzies' and Seitz's careful use of deep focus photography, *Invaders From Mars* does in fact have an almost 3D effect.

Menzies envisaged the whole film as though it were seen through the eyes of a dreaming child, and to convey this, he used carefully distorted sets and odd perspectives, when David runs into the police station, it is seen as a sterile, looming corridor, the clock on the wall behind the desk sergeant never changes, time is standing still, as is so often the case in dreams. In many scenes Menzies kept the camera at the boy's eye-level, and succeeded brilliantly in creating a world as seen through David's eyes.

The Mutants are lumbering, green suited hulks, with blatantly obvious zippers in the costumes and great bug eyes, but then maybe that is how a child would see such creatures in dream. Let's not forget it is David's dream and he is the hero of it, alerting the world to the Martian invaders, and in one scene even showing the army how to use the Martian ray gun.

Carefully utilising his small budget, Menzies redressed several sets for other scenes. This is most obvious with the police station set which is used later for the attempted assassination of Dr William

Wilson in his laboratory.

The site of the Martian landing is a carefully constructed set, using a painted backdrop, artificial trees and the superbly surreal touch of the path leading to nowhere.

Mechanical effects, miniatures and explosions were created by the Lydecker brothers, Howard and Theodore, who provided more stunning miniatures and explosions in the Republic serials of the 30s and 40s such as *Captain Marvel* and *Spy Smasher*, than both *Star Wars* and *Superman the Movie* put together. They were probably the best mechanical effects team in the business, and a serious study of their contributions to film special effects is long overdue. Unfortunately their work on the film went uncredited.

Optical effects are credited to Jack Cosgrove, though in fact, much of this work was done by Jack Rabin and Irving Block, the latter being responsible for the original screen treatment of *Forbidden Planet* (*Starburst* 9).

One shot in the film shows beautifully how an effects team work together to create a single scene. The idea for the Martian leader was from John Battle's original story. The Martian was played by midget Luce Potter, the design was by Menzies and art director Boris Leven, the Lydeckers constructed the dome and tentacled body, the special metallic makeup was created by Anatole Robbins, two assistants manipulated the tentacles off screen by wires, cinematographer John Seitz photographed the matte and Jack Rabin composited the mattes optically.

Several actors portrayed the Mutants, but two extremely tall men were used for the principal shots. They were Max Palmer, a towering eight feet six inch tall circus performer, and Lock Martin, the cinema doorman who had portrayed the robot Gort in Robert Wise's *Day the Earth Stood Still*. To further accentuate the size of the Mutants Menzies used in some scenes midgets dressed as soldiers.

Menzies' completed film ran a little over 65 minutes, which was not really long enough for a feature. Alperson brought in director Wesley Barry (director of *Creation of the Humanoids*), who added to the scenes in the observatory where Kelston shows David the astronomy charts and the UFO models. He also added several repeated shots of army manoeuvres stock footage, as well as repeating shots of the Mutants running through tunnels. Even by printing them in reverse they are obvious. This brought the running time up to 78 minutes. For European release, Alperson deleted the dream ending, thereby destroying Menzies' entire concept.

French composer, Raoul Kraushaar (who later worked on *Ten Commandments* and *Cabaret*) composed a fine atmospheric score; particularly memorable was the sound heard whenever the Martians abducted human beings. This he achieved by using eight male voices and eight female voices fed through an echo chamber.

In 1976 a Kansas City film distributor, Wade Williams, obtained the rights to the film and reissued it, deleting much of the stock and repeated footage, along with several lines he considered "corny" by 70s

standards, although he did retain the non-Menzies observatory footage as well as the original dream ending.

Sadly, the film has not been reissued in Britain and apparently the only surviving prints are extremely mutilated, with some scenes so bleached out with age and other scenes so dark they are almost unwatchable, and of course the dream ending is completely missing.

William Cameron Menzies was probably one of the greatest and most innovative designers in film history, and *Invaders From Mars* his most effective work as a designer and director.

#### **Invaders from Mars (1953)**

Jimmy Hunt (as David MacLean), Leif Erikson (George MacLean), Hillary Brooke (Mary MacLean), Helena Carter (Dr Patricia Blake), Arthur Franz (Dr Stuart Kelston), Morris Ankrum (Colonel Fielding). Designed and directed by William Cameron Menzies. Screenplay by Richard Blake, Art direction by Boris Leven, Music by Raoul Kraushaar, Special effects by Jack Cosgrove, Makeup by Gene Hibbs and Anatole Robbins, Photography by John Seitz, Edited by Arthur Roberts, Produced by Edward L. Alperston. A Twentieth Century-Fox Production. Time: 78 mins.

*Special thanks to Robert Daisley and Derek Treharne for additional research information.*



Above: David demonstrates a Martian ray gun to members of the US Army. Left: The leader of the Martian invasion force is a strange tentacled creature in a glass dome.



**Top TV fantasy with The Avengers ~ see page 12**